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CONAN THE KING

My
Favourite
CUESS



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"I'LL ANSWER YOU.
ZANDRA I AM.

MAD ZANDRA MEN CALLED ME,
FEARING MY BLACK ART LIKE DEATH'S
COLD KISS.

"AND ISN'T IT SORRY AND SHAMEFUL THE
WAY I AM THIS DAY, WITH NO WITCHCRAFT
LEFT ME TO PRACTICE AT ALL-- AND I
ADORING EVIL WITH THE PASSION OF A
DARK AND WICKED LOVER?"

STAN LEE PRESENTS

Fragmentments: A WITCH'S TALE

"MINE'S A BITTER TALE
SURELY, FRAGMENT'S OF
MEMORY--TWO NIGHTS
PAST AND THE YOUNG
LAD DARKEYES, BORNE
TO ME IN THE TALONS
OF A FIRE-FALCON...

"...A BOLD LAD FULL OF SPITE
AND LUSTING FOR SINISTER
MAGIC.

THERE WAS AN APPRENTICE WHO
MIGHT BE HEKATA'S OWN ENVY--

"--AND YET, BEFORE THE
CURSED SUN DROVE MOON
FROM THE SKY, ALL WAS
AFLAME...

SIMONS
AND
SHERWOOD

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"... ALL BECOME
MEMORIES... AYE
TWO NIGHTS PAST
AND THE YOUNG
LAD, DARKEYES,
AND THE GRAVE-
YARD..."

I DON'T
UNDERSTAND,
MAD TANDRA.

WHEN I USED TO COME
BARGAINING FOR POISONS
AND HERBS YOU LOOKED
LIKE A WRINKLED OLD
CRONE!

'TIS A GUISE
I DO WEAR
'TIL I'M TRUSTING
A BODY, DARKEYES.

AND SINCE I'M
AFTER THINKING
YOU'RE MOST CUN-
NING WITH HEART
FULL OF DEVILTRY...

... I
CONJURED THE
FLAMING FALCON
THAT CARRIED
YOU HERE THIS
MIDNIGHT TO
PROVE YOURSELF
WORTHY OR NO.

WORTHY I
AM, WITCH-
WOMAN, AND
BY SET, YOU'LL
GUIDE ME TO
MASTERY!

HERE'S
THE CORPSE!

HURRY--BENEATH
THE YEW TREE.

OF DOGS
FLESH
YOU'VE
EATEN...

... AND BOUND
YOUR WAIST WITH
DEAD MAN'S SKIN...

-- AND NOW THE ALIRA OF
EVIL ABOUT YOU WOULD
BE TURNING A DEMON
GREEN WITH JEALOUSY.

THE KNIFE,
DARKEYES!

THE KNIFE!

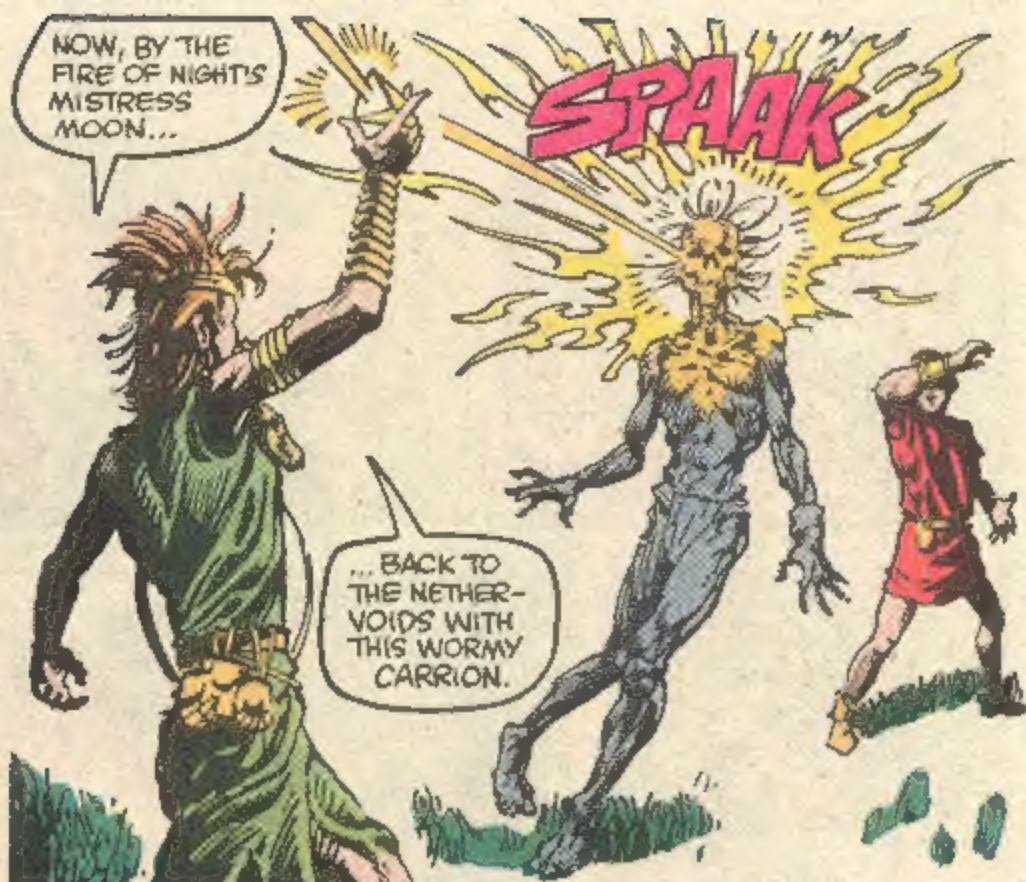






WELL?!
WELL, WITCH-
WOMAN--?

YOU'RE A
VERY DEVIL
TO HAVE RAISED
THE DEAD,
LAD!



NOW, BY THE
FIRE OF NIGHT'S
MISTRESS
MOON...

...BACK TO
THE NETHER-
VOIDS WITH
THIS WORMY
CARRION.

SPAARK

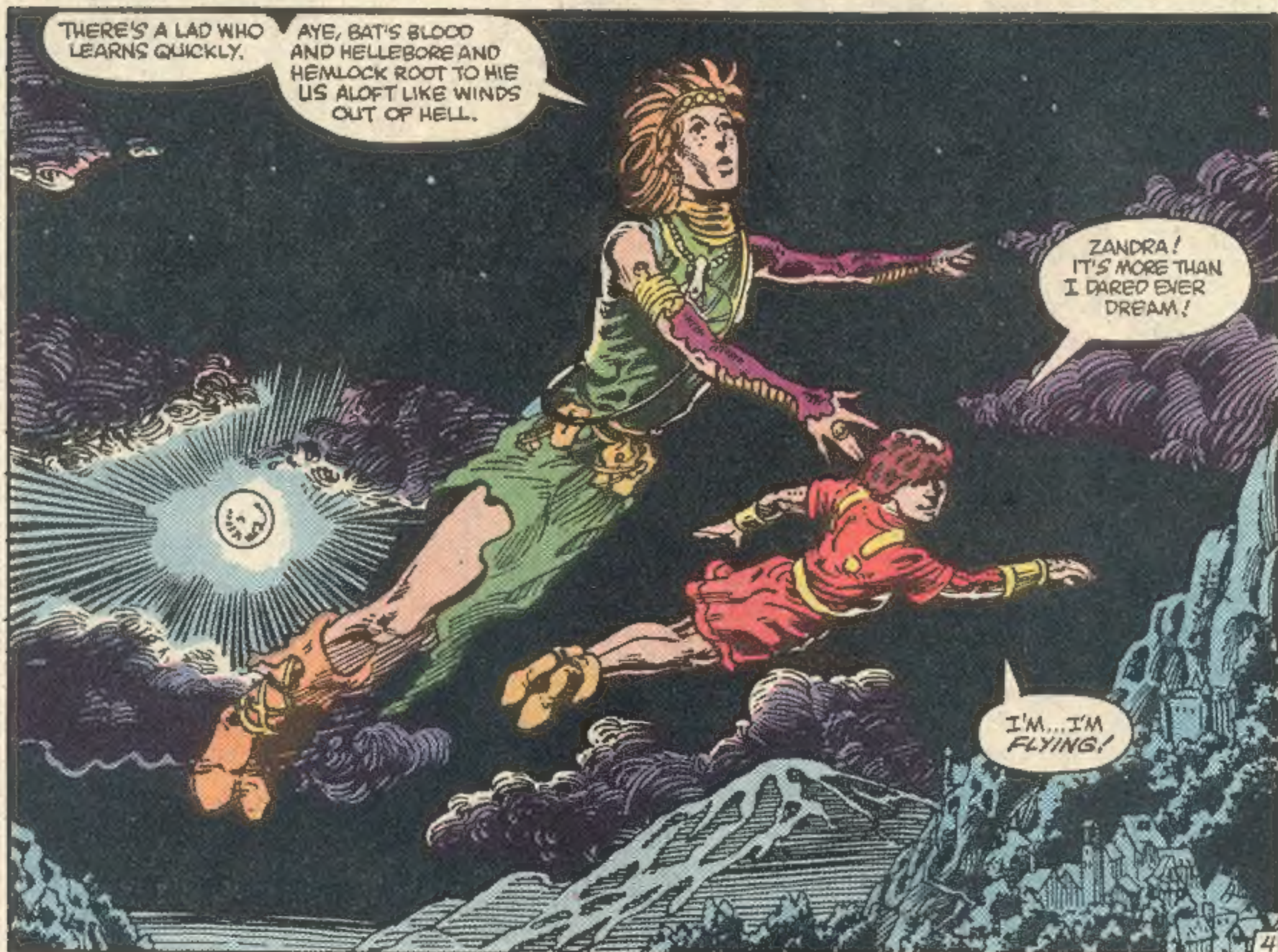


YOU'LL DWELL WITH
ME IN AQUILONIA'S
WOODS SURELY,
DARKEYES.

FOR I'LL TEACH
YOU CONJURINGS
THAT WILL RAISE
DRAGONS FROM THE
EARTH'S BOWELS AND
STORMS FROM THE
BLACK ABYSS OF
SPACE.

NOW WE'D BEST
ANOINT OURSELVES--

-- WITH BAT'S BLOOD
AND HELLEBORE?



THERE'S A LAD WHO
LEARNS QUICKLY.

AYE, BAT'S BLOOD
AND HELLEBORE AND
HEMLOCK ROOT TO HIE
US ALOFT LIKE WINDS
OUT OF HELL.

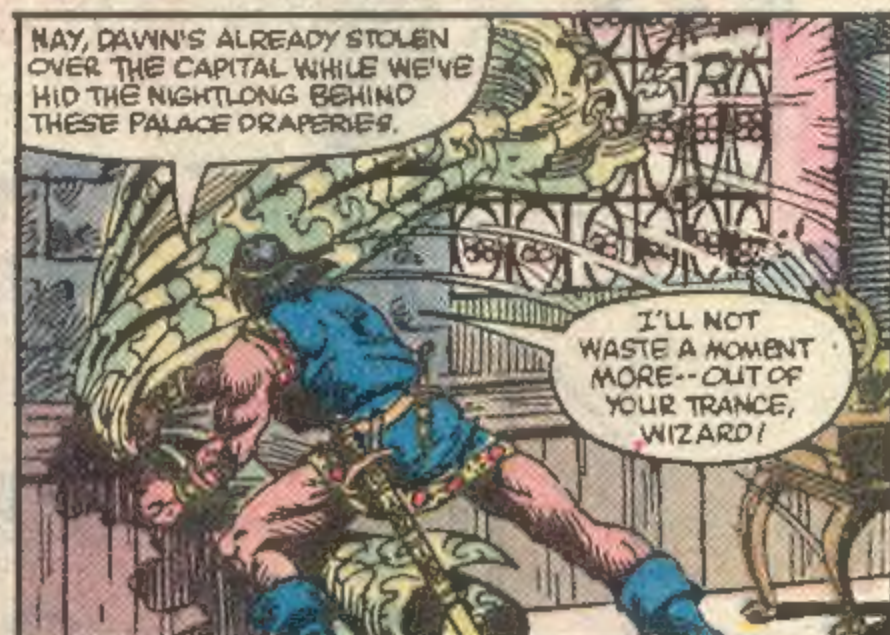
ZANDRA!
IT'S MORE THAN
I DARED EVER
DREAM!

I'M...I'M
FLYING!

"IT'S TOO LATE I LEARNED THE LAD'S FATHER WAS
A MIGHTY WARRIOR WHO WOULD RIDE THE LENGTH
OF TARANTIA AGAINST US THAT VERY NEXT DAY..."

CROM'S BONES,
PROSPERO!

HOW LONG MUST I ABIDE
THE PRIEST, DEXITHEUS'
SORCEROUS MUMBLINGS BEFORE I
LEARN WHO'S CARRIED OFF THAT
WORTHLESS BRAT OF MINE?





"ALL THAT WHILE AND THE WHOLE DAY AFTER, *DARKEYES* BURIED HIMSELF IN THE SPELLS OF MY ANCIENT GRIMOIRES IN THE WOODS BEYOND *TARANTIA*.



"UNTIL...

THE MOON'S RISEN FULL AND OUR POWERS ARE REPLENISHED SINCE YESTERNIGHT.



NOW YOURSELF DO BE WEDDING YOUR MANNISH ENERGIES TO ZANDRA'S WOMANISH...

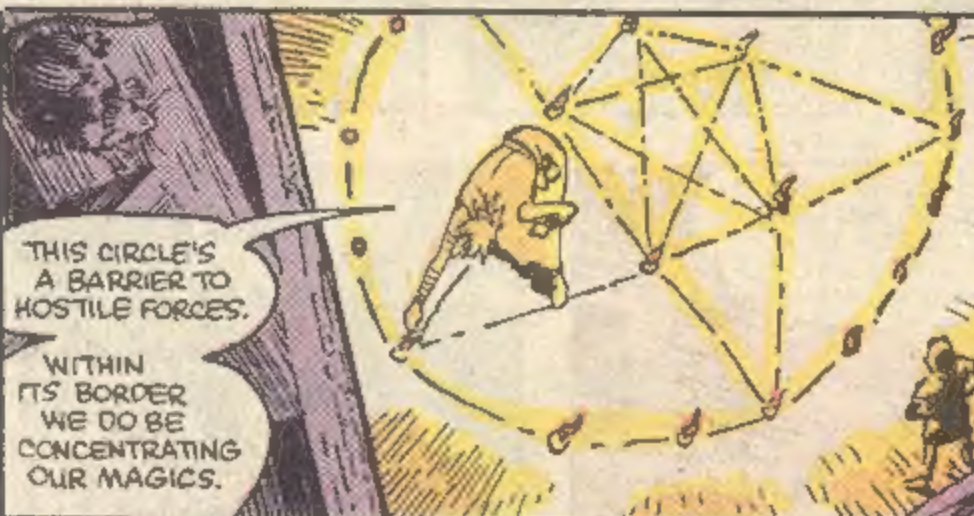


... AND THE DEMONS OF HELL WILL DANCE TO OUR CONJURINGS SHURELY.



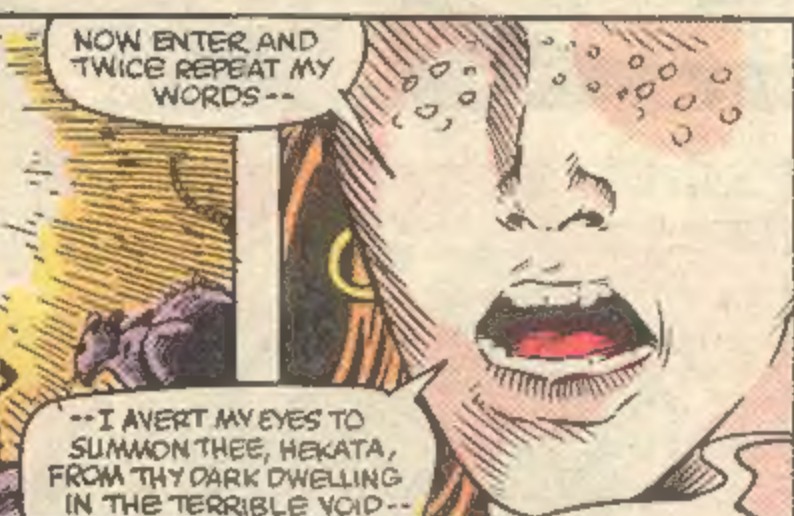
THIS CIRCLE'S A BARRIER TO HOSTILE FORCES.

WITHIN ITS BORDER WE DO BE CONCENTRATING OUR MAGICS.



NOW ENTER AND TWICE REPEAT MY WORDS--

--I AVERT MY EYES TO SUMMON THEE, HEKATA, FROM THY DARK DWELLING IN THE TERRIBLE VOID--



ZANDRA, THE CANDLES! WHAT'S HAPPENED? WHY ARE YOU STOPPING?

WHIIISHPFF



A QUEER AND STRANGE THING IT IS, *DARKEYES*. I SENSE MAGICAL DISTURBANCES...



... AND A TROOP OF HORSEMEN CRYING 'TAURUS! TAURUS!' AT THEIR 'LINGS' PEAK THE WAY THEY'RE LIKE TO WAKE THE MOLDY DEAD.

MY FATHER AND THE *BLACK DRAGONS*!

YOU MUST STOP HIM, WITCH, OR HE'LL DRAG ME FROM HERE BY THE HEELS!



QUICKLY! MY GRIMOIRE FOR A SPELL OF OBSTACLES...



... SINCE THERE'S LITTLE I'VE GOTTEN TO MEMORY DESPITE MY YEARS AT THIS CRAFT.

TAURUS! BY CROM, I'M
HOARSE WITH THUNDERING
HIS NAME, PROSPERO!

INDEED,
METHINKS YOUR
ROAR WOULD CURE
A DEAF MAN,
CONAN.

I SAY YOU, TRUST
DEXITHELIS TO LEAD US TO
THE PRINCE, AND SAVE THIS
BELLOWING INSTEAD FOR
GREAT LAUGHS AND GOOD
SONGS ON OUR RETURN.

BAGADUP

BAGADUP

BAGADUP

THE
PRINCESS
RADEGUND?!

LEONIDAS, HAVE YOU
LOST YOUR MIND?

BY YMIR, YOU'RE
JUGGLING BURNING
COALS THERE, LAD.

THE GIRL'S BEEN
BETROTHED TO BARDON
MALORIC'S ELDEST
SON SINCE THE DAY
SHE WAS BORN.

BUT, HROLF, SHE
SAID NOTHING OF--

IT'S A HARD BLOW
EVEN FOR A BLACK
DRAGON, EH, LAD?

STILL, THERE'S
MANY A BEAUTY
TO BE HAD IN THE
COURT--

-- NAY, HROLF. NOT TWO
LIPS AS RED AS
RADEGUND'S NOR A PAIR
OF ARMS SO WHITE.



THEY ARE--

HAHAHA

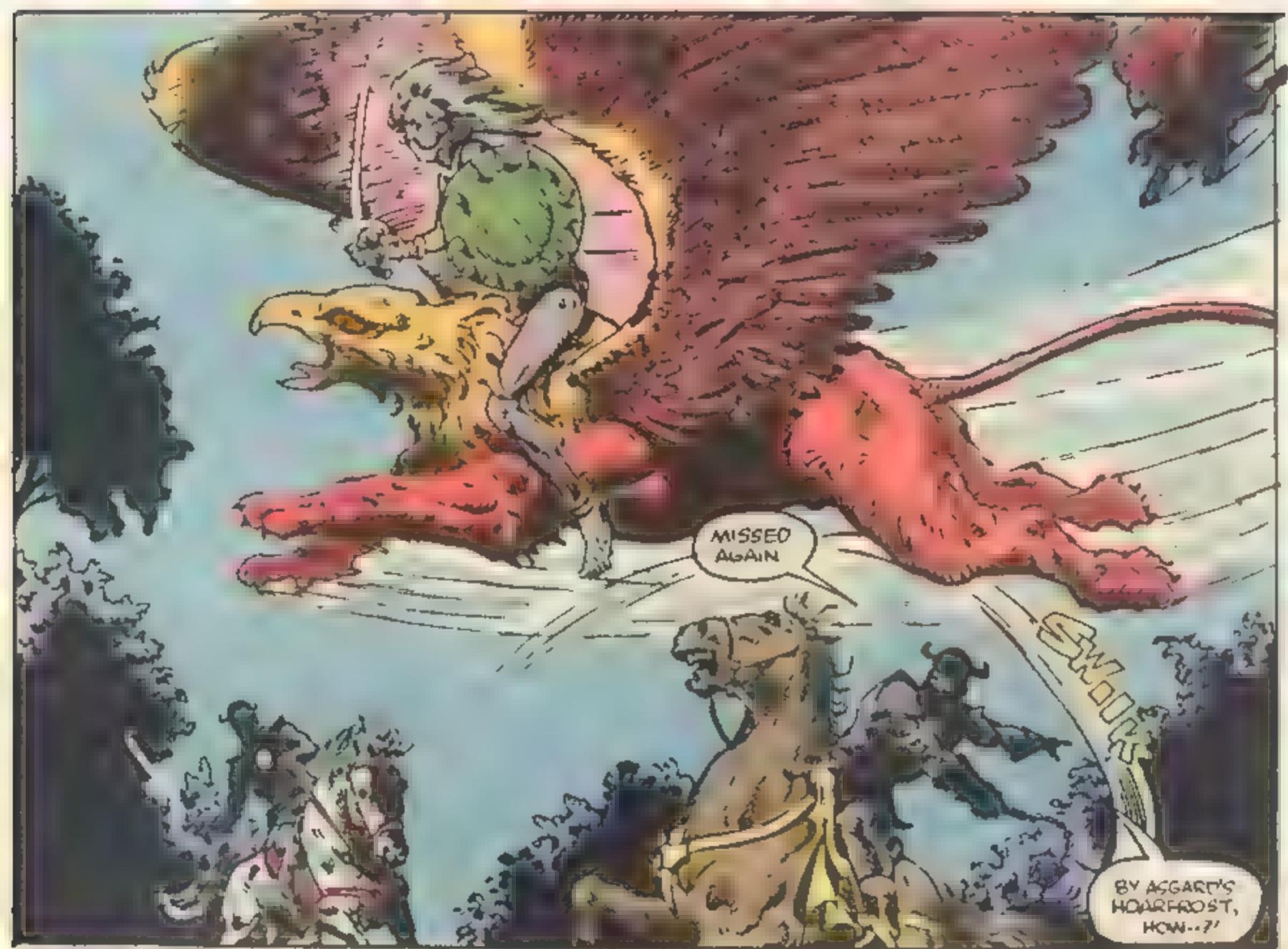
NO! MY HORSE!

THUD!

DEXITHEUS!

SO THEY'VE SWORN US OF OUR SORcery!

THEN LET THESE HORRORS TASTE THE BITE OF OUR SWORDS, BLACK DRAGONS!





SYAN-LIN BE CAREFUL, MAN!



THESE GHOULS HAVE--



-- NO TRUE BODIES



THUMP



DISEMBODIED WELLS PAWN?! MITRA .. I'M GETTING TOO OLD FOR THIS..

WHERE NOW IS THAT OPTIMISM YOU PREACHED AT ME THIS MORNING, SOLDIER?

BACK IN TARANTIA

IF I COULD BUT DIG MY BLADE INTO THEIR BELLIES--!



THEY'LL HARASS YOU NO MORE
NOW THAT I'VE REVIVED, YOUR
MAJESTY

THESE WERE NIGHT-RIDERS, MY
LIEGE, PHANTASMS AND ILLUSIONS
CONJURED BY THE DEVOTEES OF
HEKATA, GODDESS OF DEATH
AND STERILITY

THEY ARE MEANT
TO DRIVE MEN TO
EXHAUSTION AND
MADNESS.

BUT WE MUST
HASTEN NOW, FOR I
SENSE TAURUS MAY BE LOST
TO US IF WE TARRY

THE PATHWAY,
PREST!

YES THE
PATHWAY
CERTAINLY

THE MOON'S
GLOW REVEALS
THE MYSTIC TRAIL
TO MY TRAINED
EYES.

THIS WAY.

THEN SPUR YOUR STEEDS
TO THE GALLOP, FOR I'M
HOT TO LAY HANDS ON
TAURUS THE FOOL--

--AND THRASH HIM FOR THE
CHASE HE'S LED US!

A PROUD
FATHER,
OUR KING EH,
TARQUIN?

AND IT'S TOO LATE I LEARNED THEY
RODE AGAINST US WITH SORCERY
OF THEIR OWN

THEY'VE DEFEATED
THE NIGHT-RIDERS -!

LET'S FLEE,
ZANDRA

I WON'T GO
BACK TO THE
HOME I
DESPISE.

WHERE WOULD YOURSELF BE
FLEEING, DARKEYES, AND ALL MY
CHARMS AND POTIONS IN THIS
COTTAGE?

NO,
LET US DO
JOIN HANDS
AGAIN..

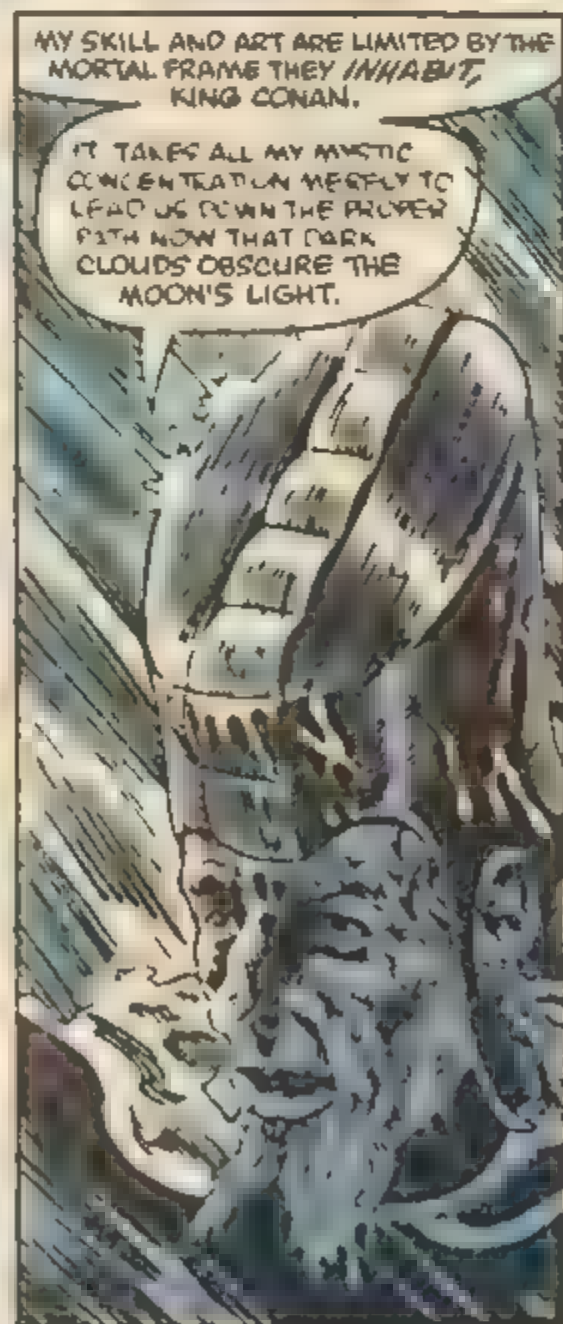
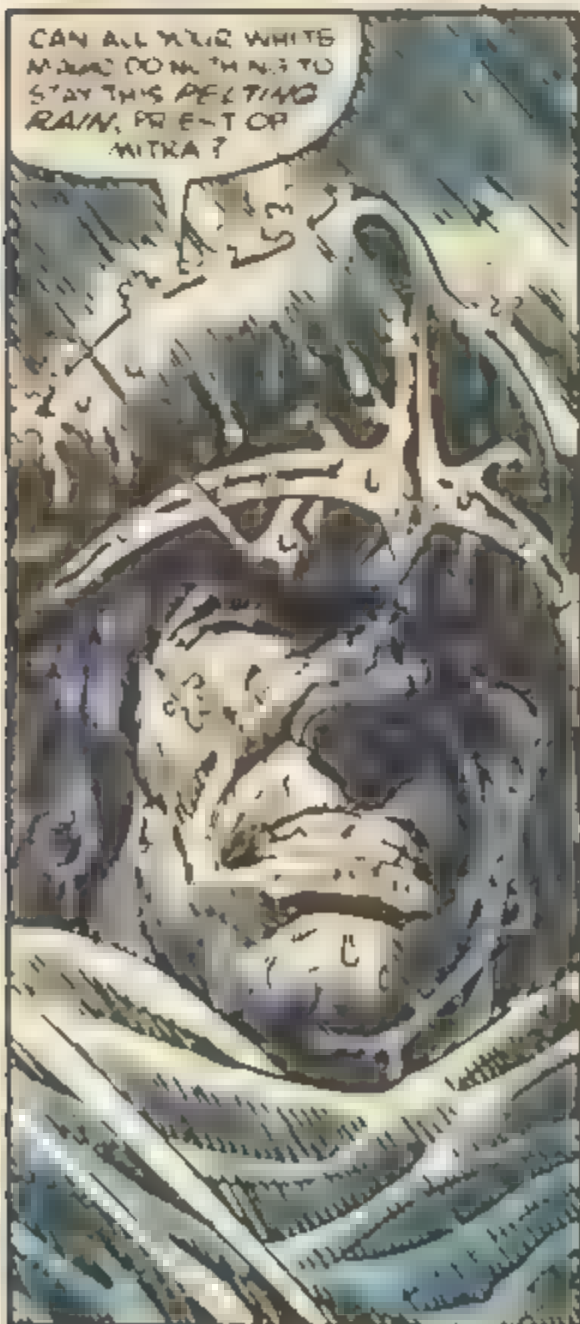
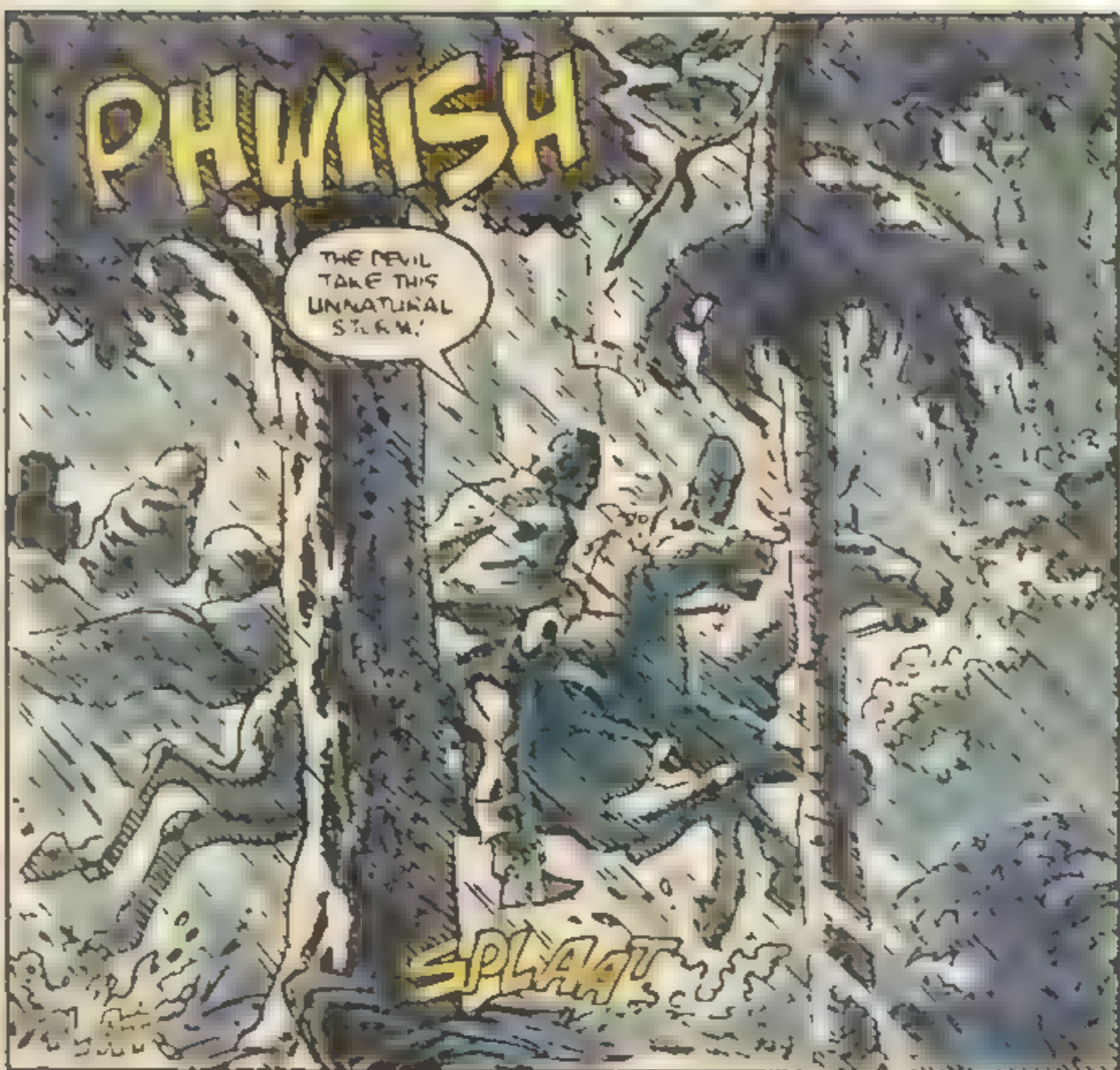
AND SUMMON THE
STORMING ELEMENTS, THAT
WAY THERE'LL BE LIGHTNING
AND THUNDER AND DRIVING
RAIN THAT WOULD FLOOD
THE RIVER STYX'S
BANKS.

COME, TAURUS, YOUR
TUTOR, GUIGEMAR IS
IN THE LIBRARY

MORE
TRESSOME
LESSONS,
MOTHER?

AYE, ZANDRA
SUMMON THE VERY
ELEMENTS--

-- TO WREAK
HAVOC ON MY
FATHER AND
HIS MEN AT
OUR BIDDING...



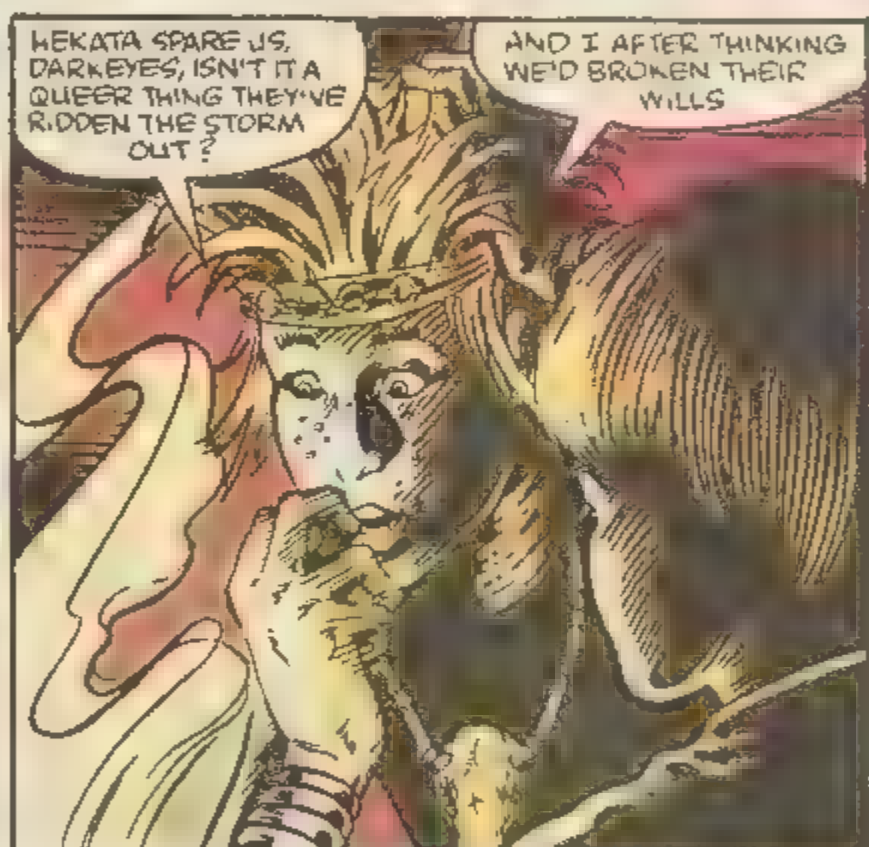
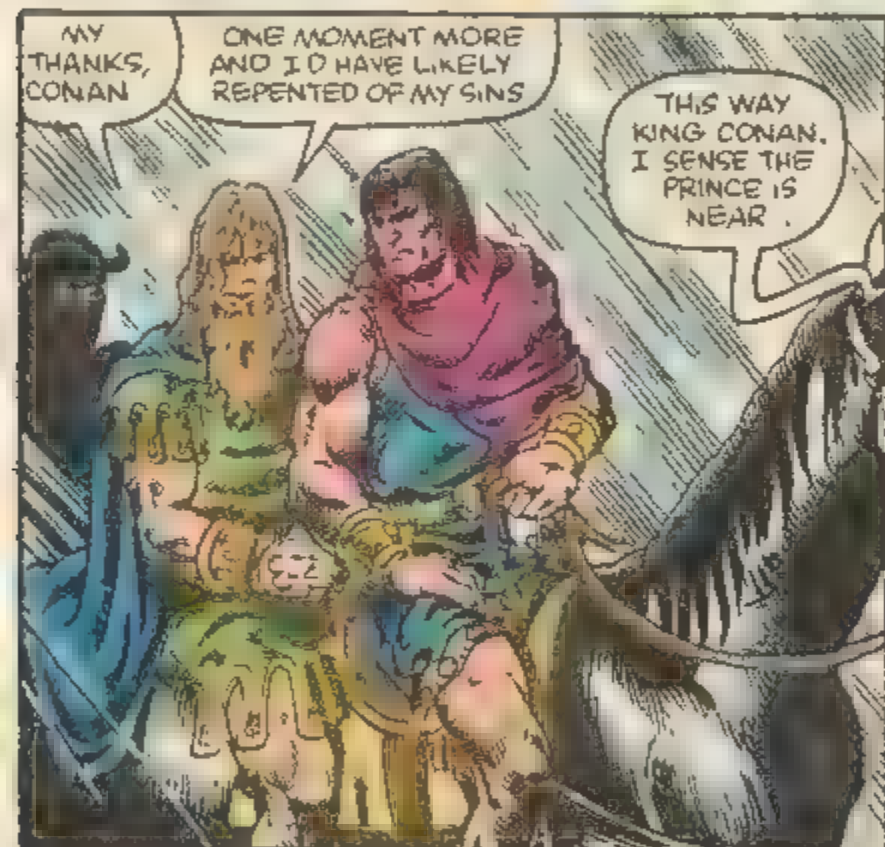
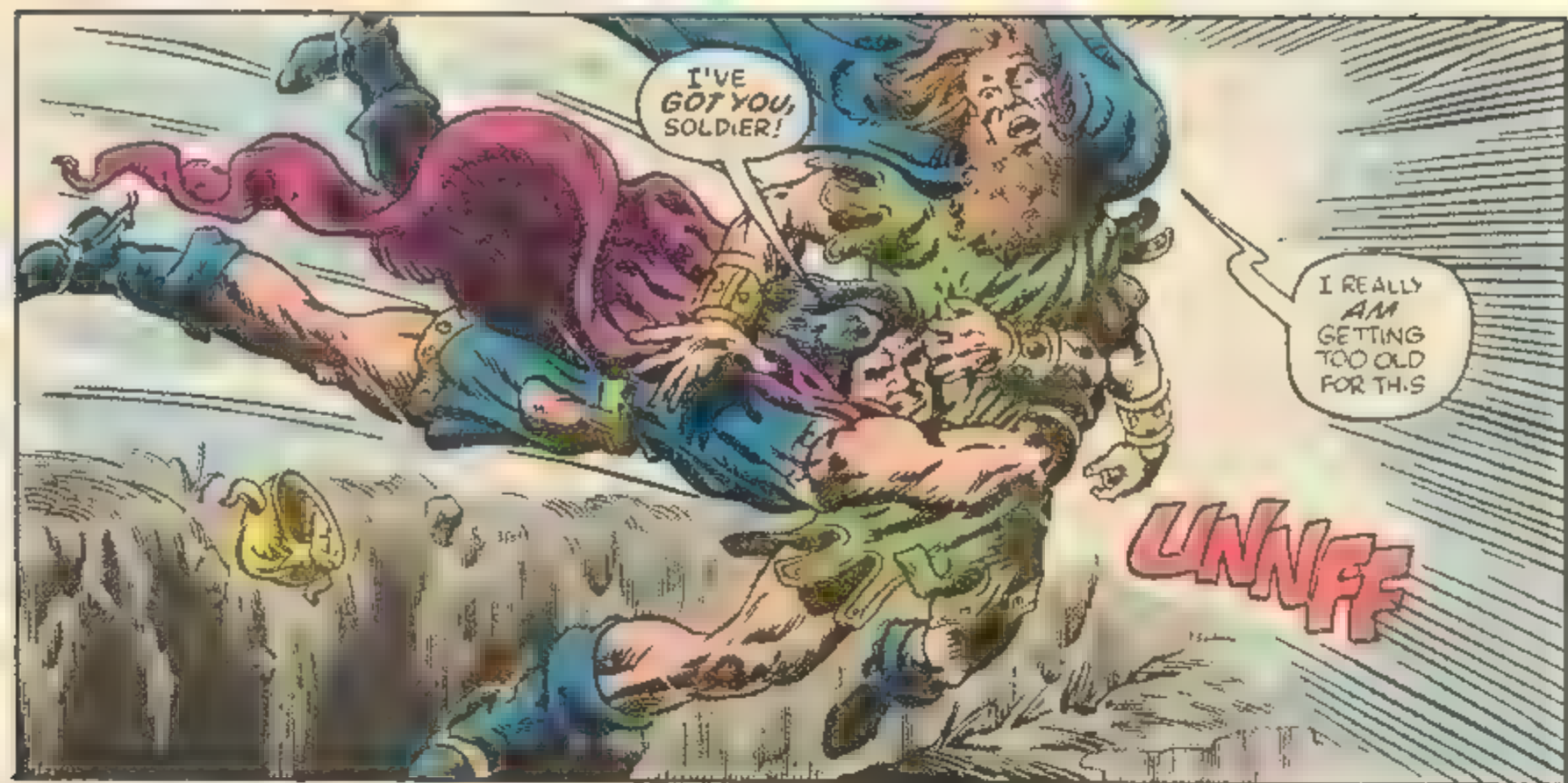
THRABOOM!

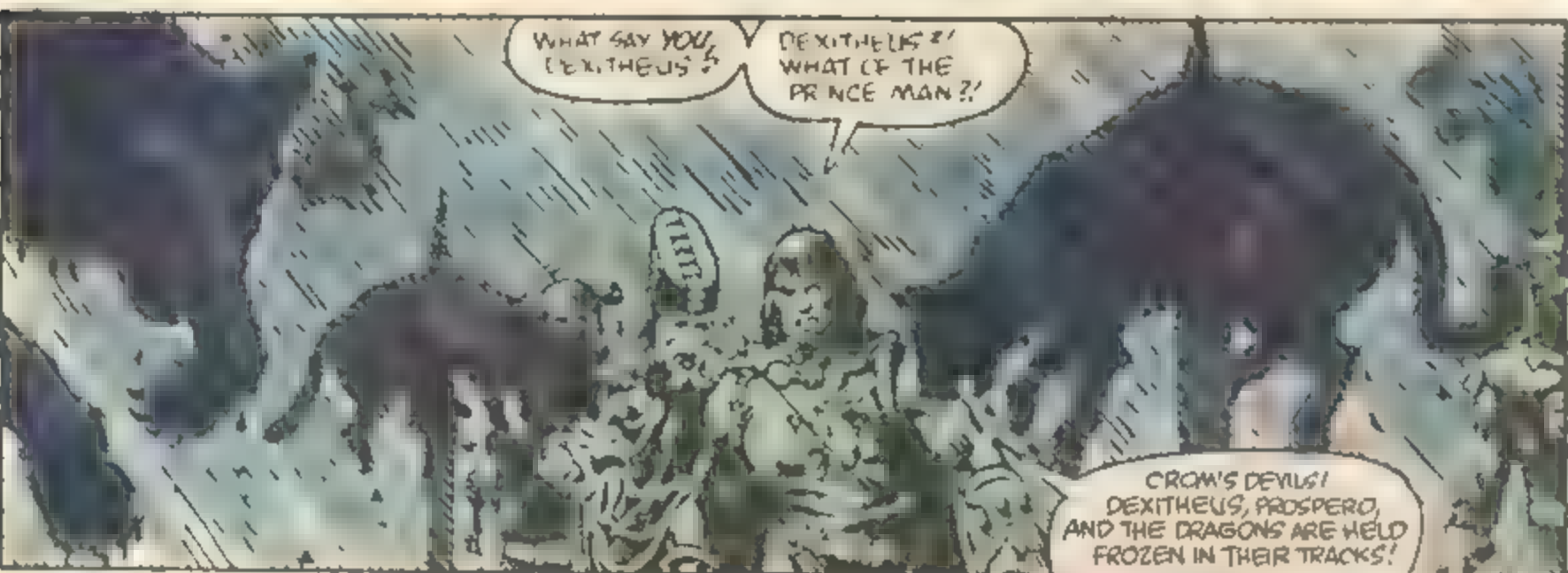
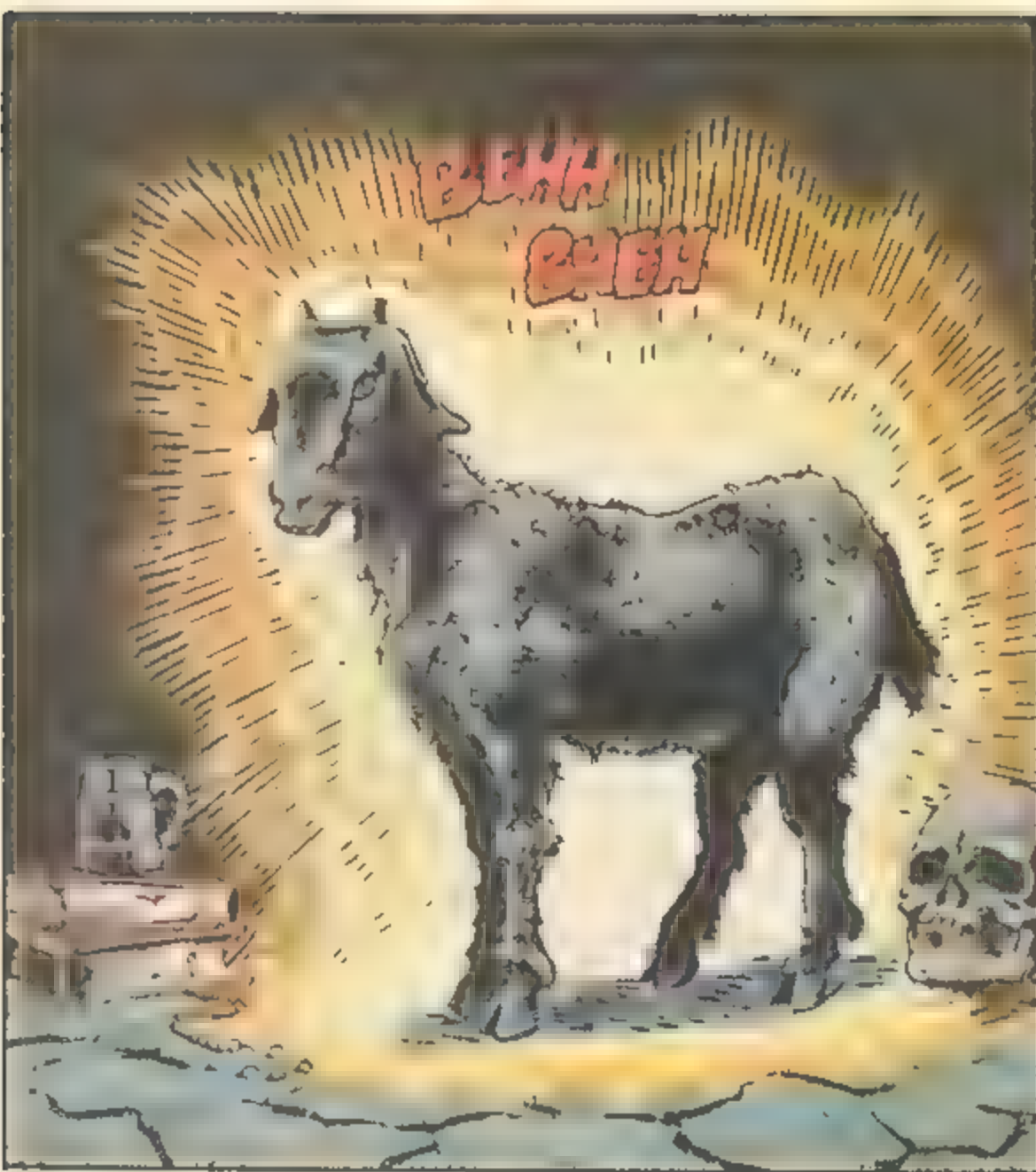
--THEUS ?

THE GROUND !
T SWALLOWS
MY MOUNT ...!

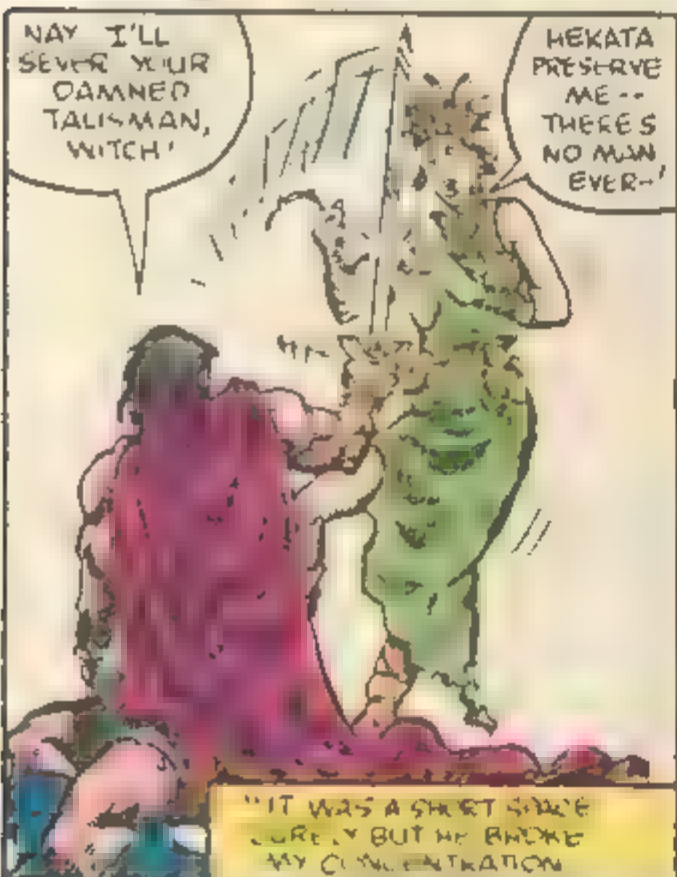
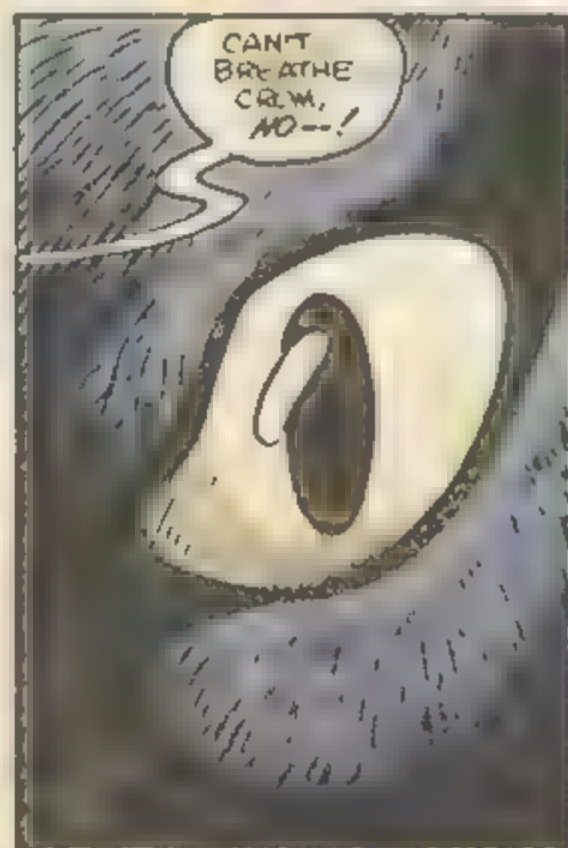
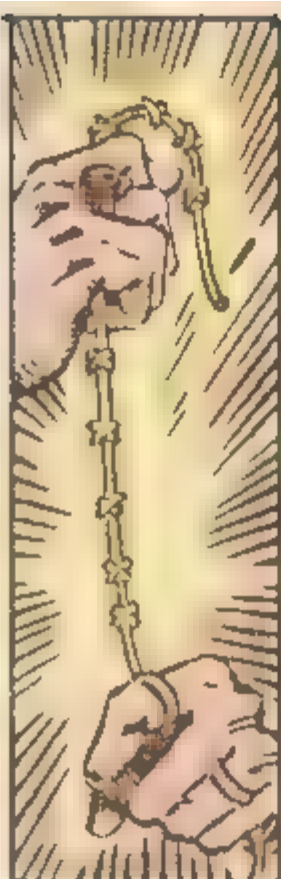
WHNNNN

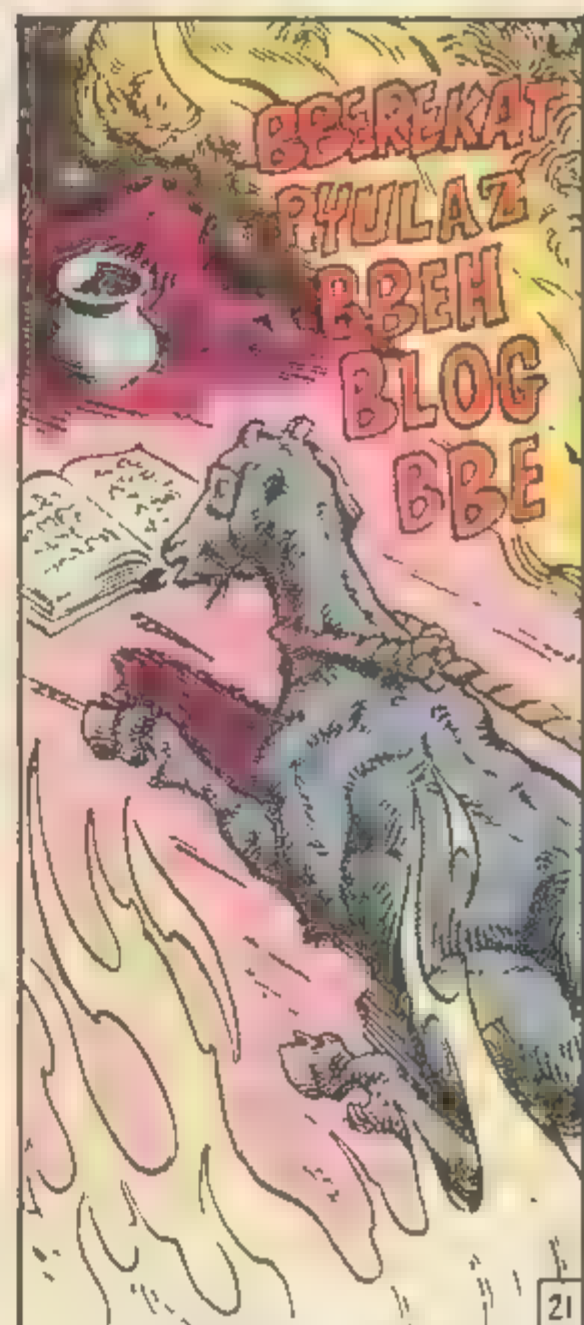
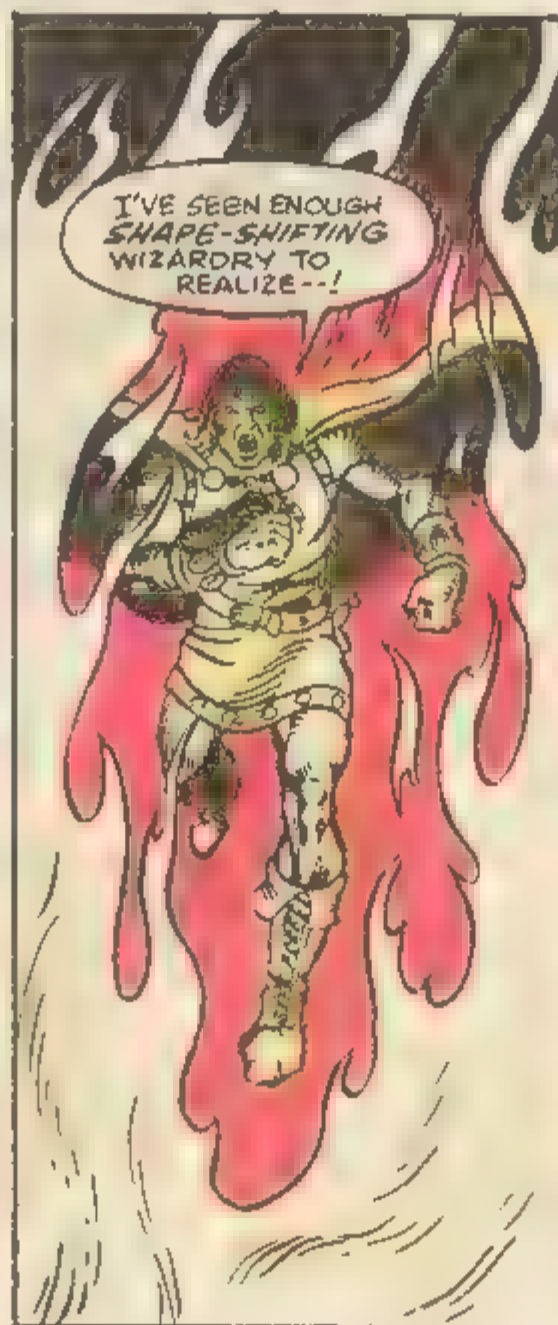
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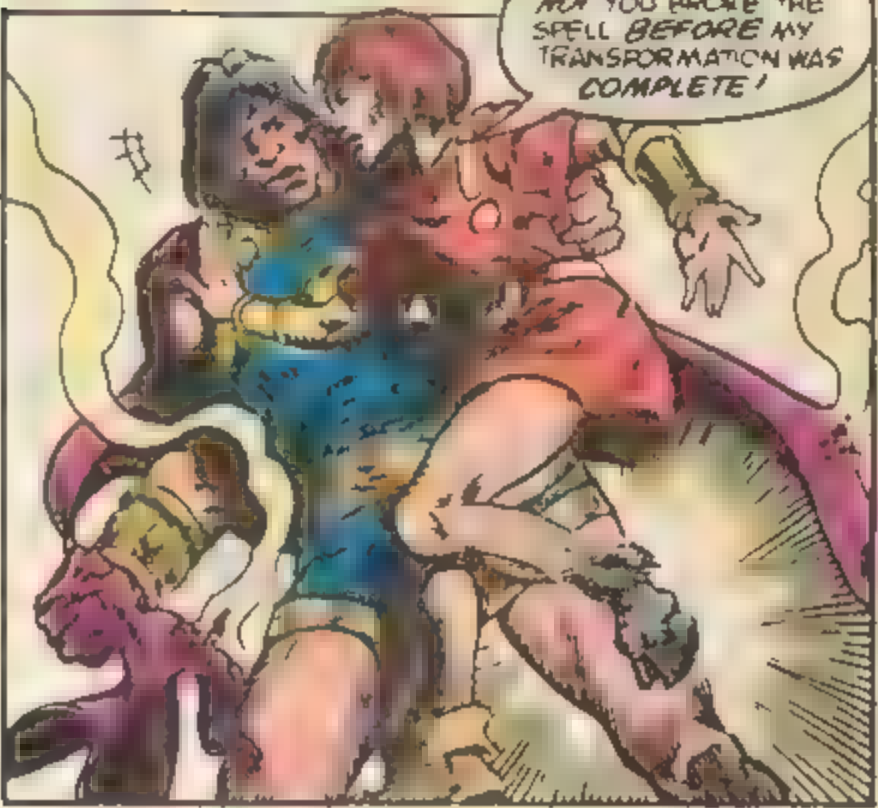
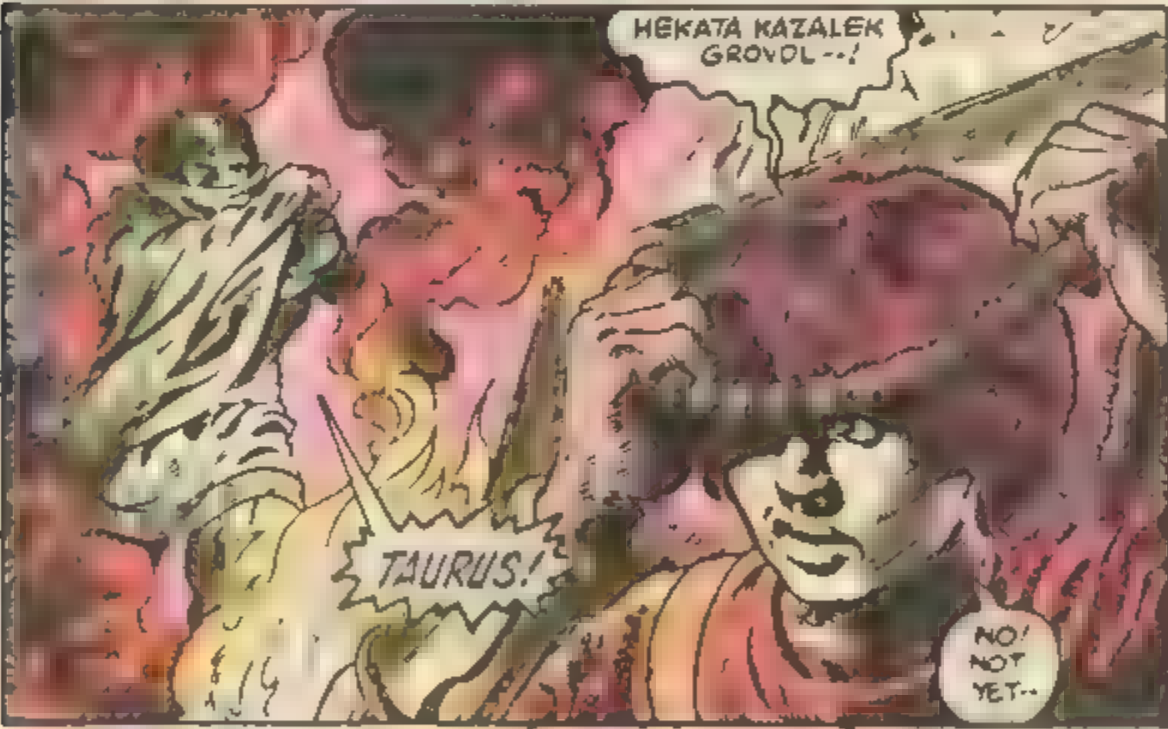
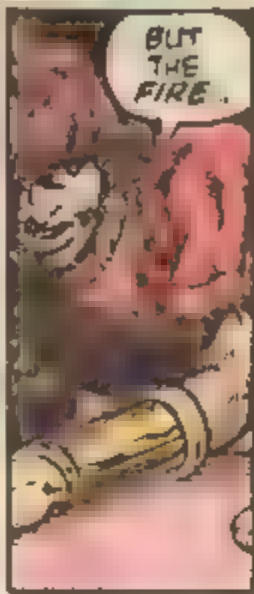












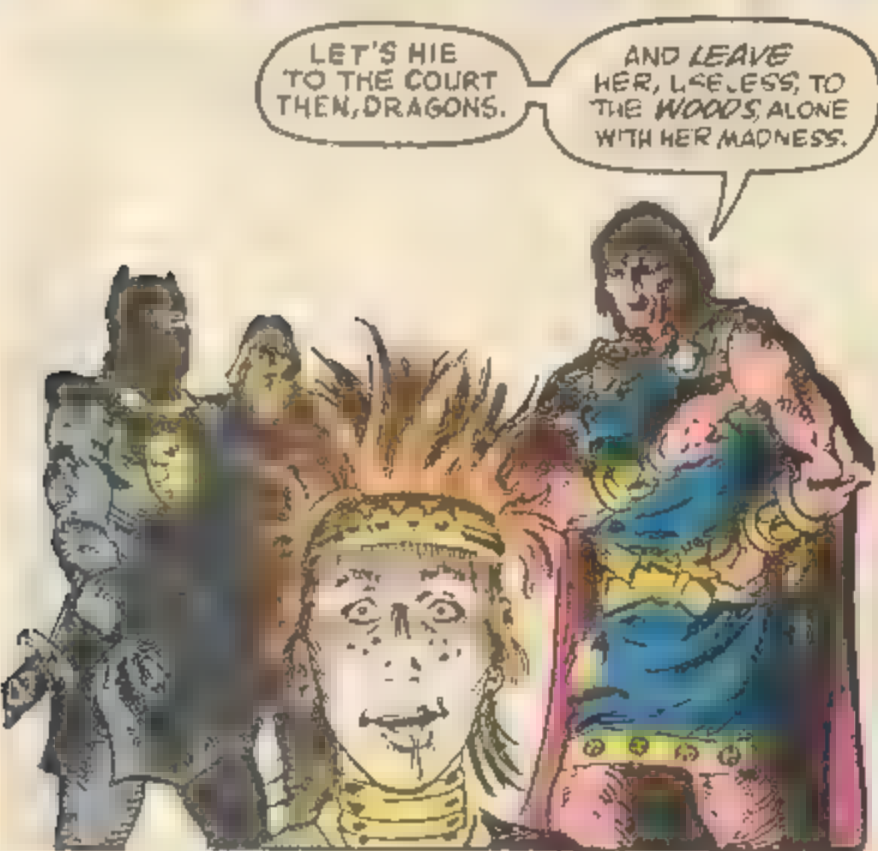


HEK! HEK! AS SOON
WARN THE MOON AGAINST
RISING, STRANGER, AND
ALL MY SPELLS BURNED
TO BITTER ASHES
WITHIN.

I CAN DO
NOTHING



NOTHING!



LET'S HIE
TO THE COURT
THEN, DRAGONS.

AND LEAVE
HER, LIFELESS, TO
THE WOODS, ALONE
WITH HER MADNESS.



AYE, BEREFT OF HER
HOME AND MAGIC, THERE'S
JUSTICE ENOUGH FOR THE
SHE-WITCH. COUNT
TROCERO WOULD BE
PROUD.



HEK! THE FLAMES
DO BE DANCING AND
DAY DAWNING, AND
THE DEMONS CURSE
YOU STRANGER!



WAIT! I'M YET
WEARING AN
AMULET ABOUT
MY NECK!

'TIS A DESPERATE
ATTEMPT--BUT ALL
THAT'S LEFT ME IS THIS
AMULET.

IF I CAN CONJURE
THE SON OF CONAN ACROSS
SPACE, WE'LL FLEE BEFORE
HIS FATHER FOLLOWS.

OH NO NO NO
MY WIFE!

SOME REMAINING
OCCULT ENERGIES.
'TIS TO BE EXPECTED
WHEN DARK POWERS
ARE EXPECTED SO
NEARBY AS THEY
HAVE BEEN THIS
NIGHT

AND WHEN WE ARRIVE
TO COURT BY THE
NIGHT OF A MENTAL
SIEGE IN THE
TO THE GORTS ARMY
WHICH DISFIGURES
THE YOUNG PRINCE.

I'LL SET A CHARM
AT ONCE ABOUT THE BOY
THAT WILL PROTECT HIM
FROM FURTHER FORCE
OF EVIL FOR THE NONCE
YOUR MAJESTY

"THE WIFE'S
MY TALE"



AND IT'S A FOOL
I AM NOT THINKING
CONAN WOULD BE
HAVING MORE
THAN ONE SON...

AND ME
CONJURING WITHOUT
HIS PROPER NAME SO
THAT I CARRIED YOU
INSTEAD OF DARKEYES
ACROSS SPACE

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Geoff Isherwood
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Jim Shooter

Having survived his first taste of slavery, Prince Conan II, crown prince of Aquilonia, arrived in Numalia, Nemedia's second greatest city. Starving and penniless, Conan was forced into the life of a thief, and on his first outing falsely accused of a wealthy merchant's death. Now several weeks later, Conan is led to executioner's square.

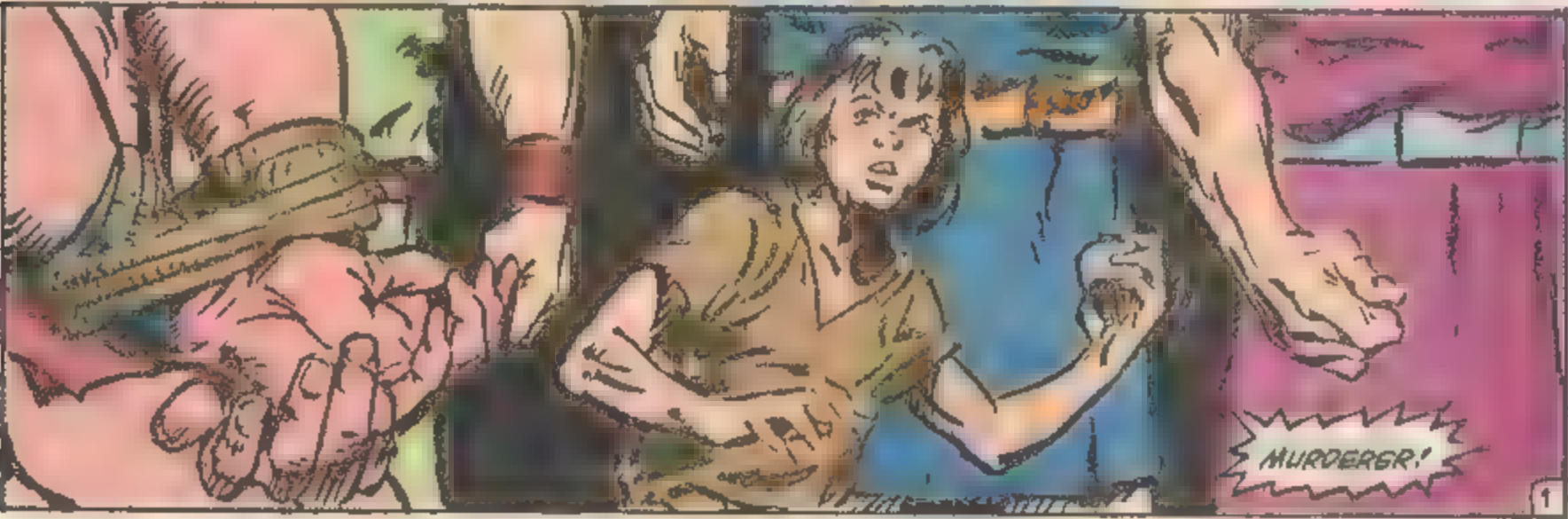
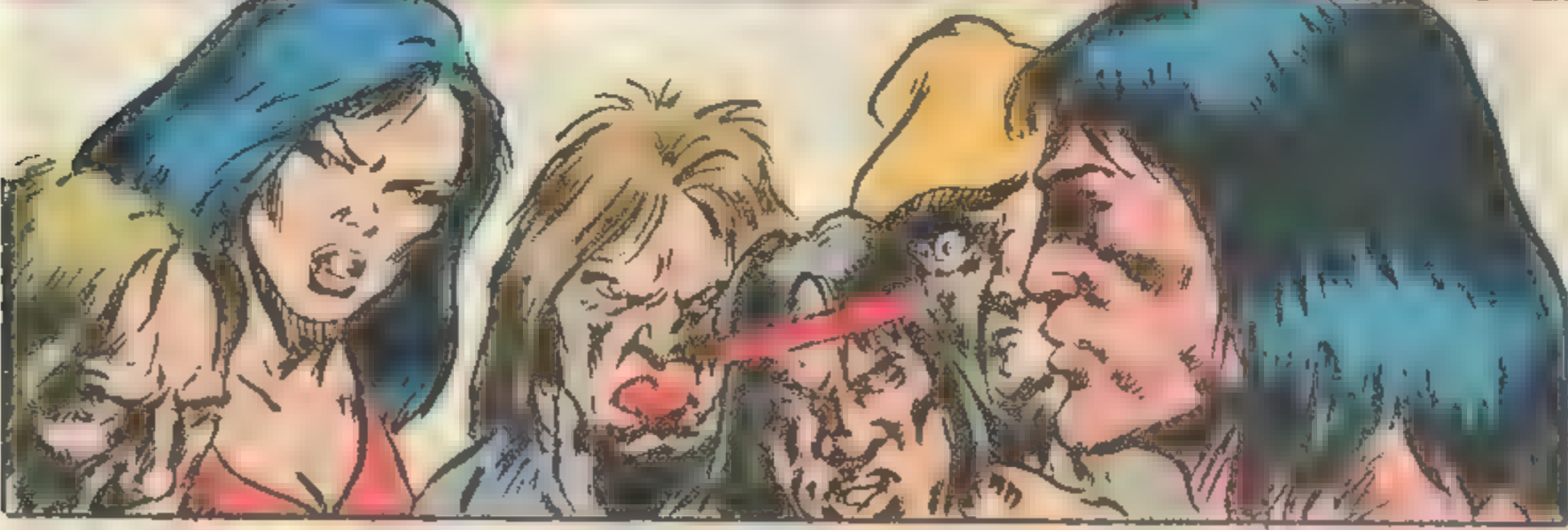
By Alan Zelenetz
and Marc Silvestri



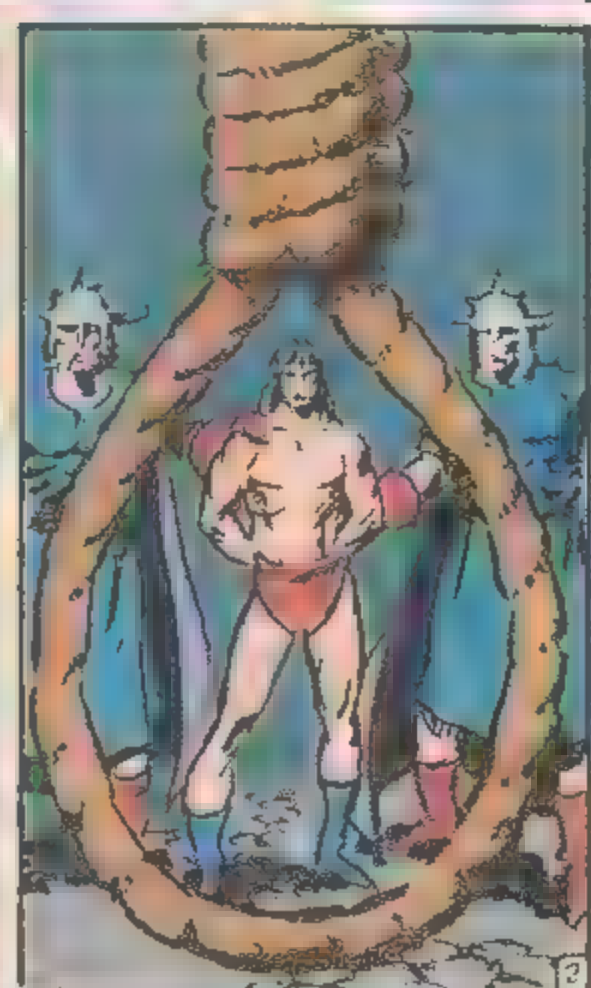
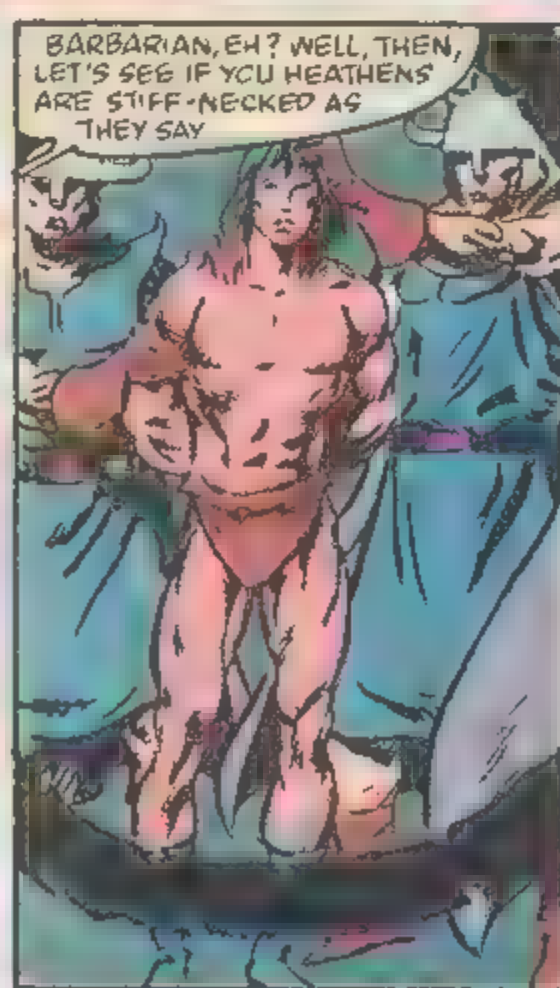
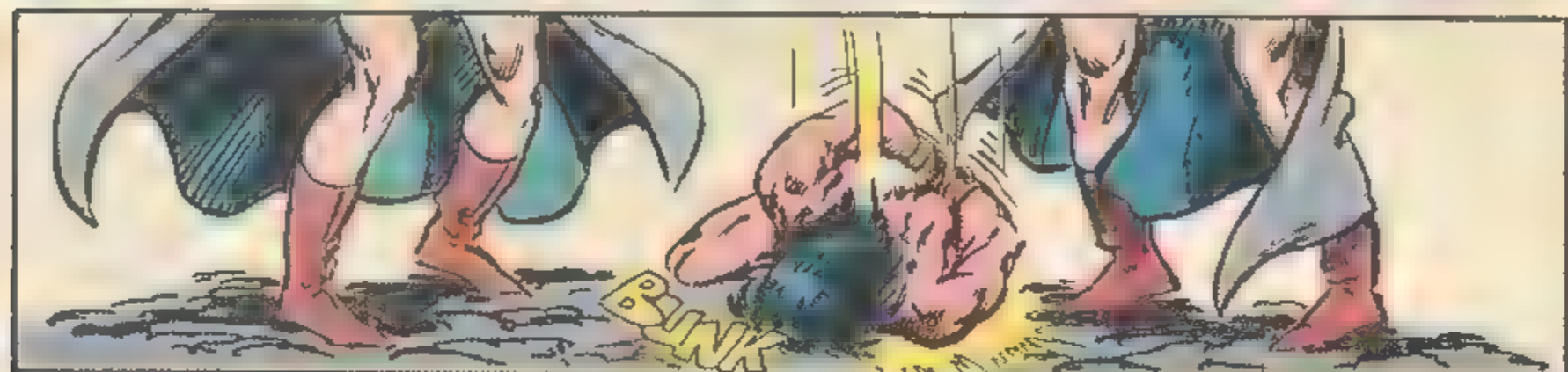
Stan Lee PRESENTS:

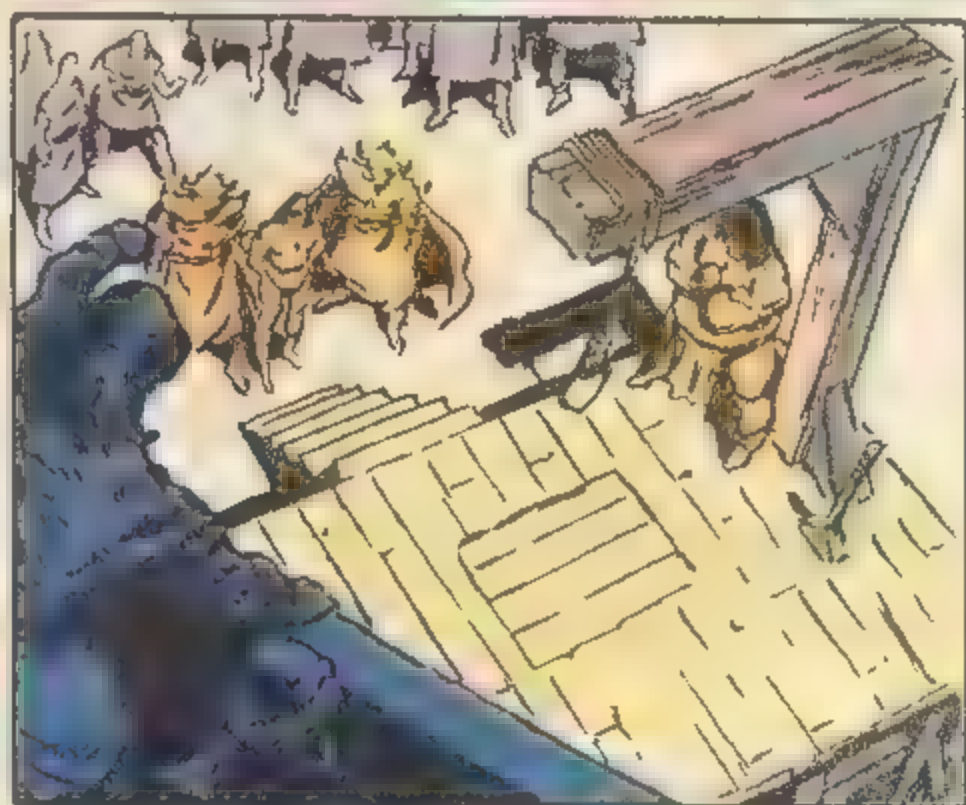
CONAN

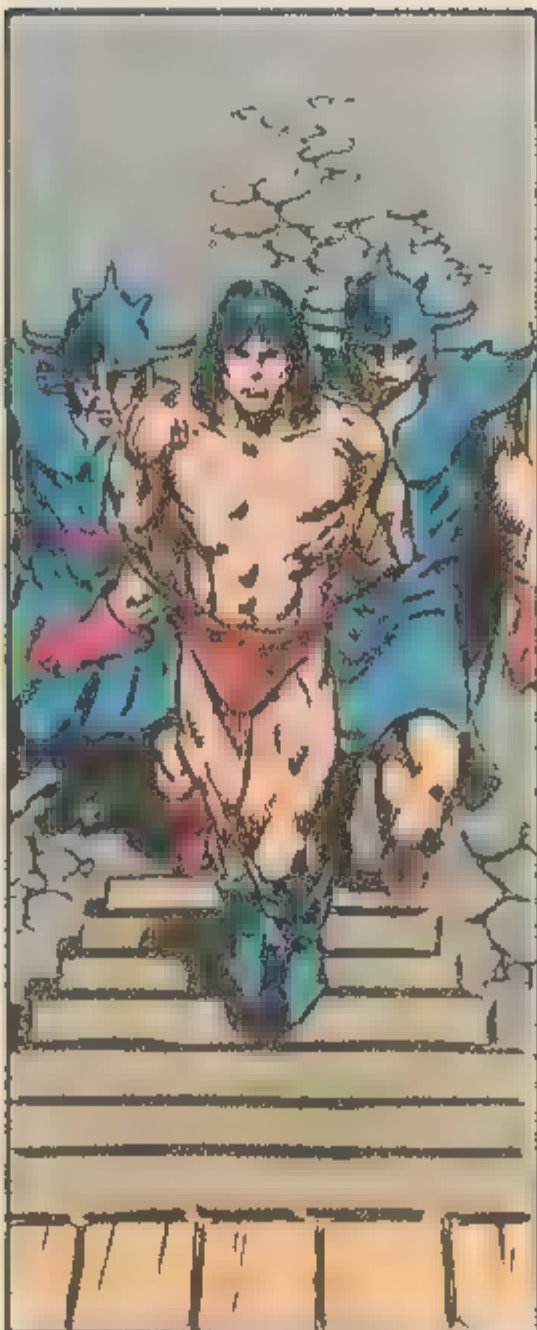
SON OF THE BARBARIAN KING

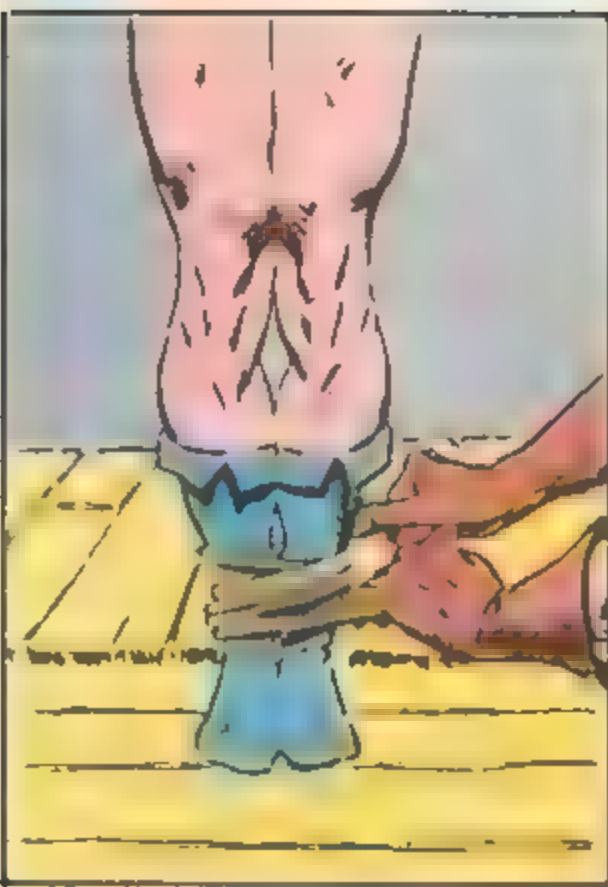


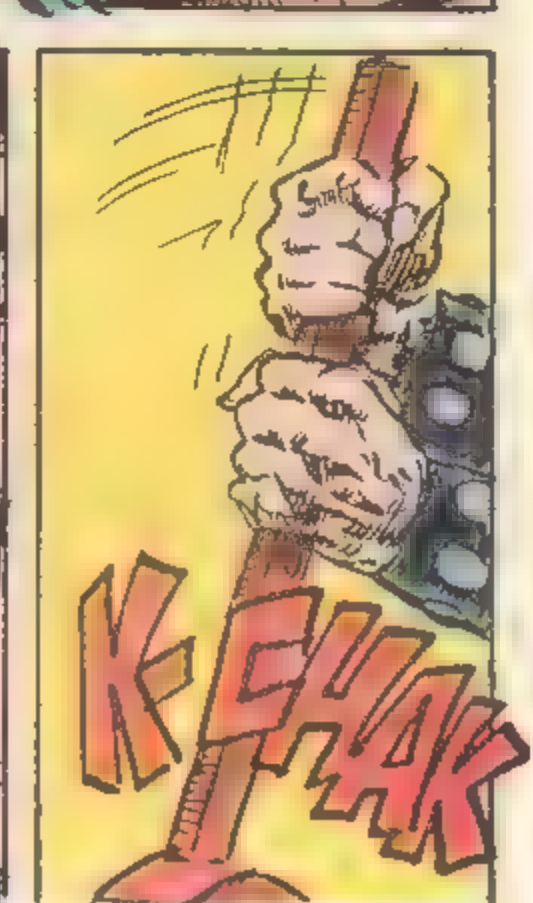
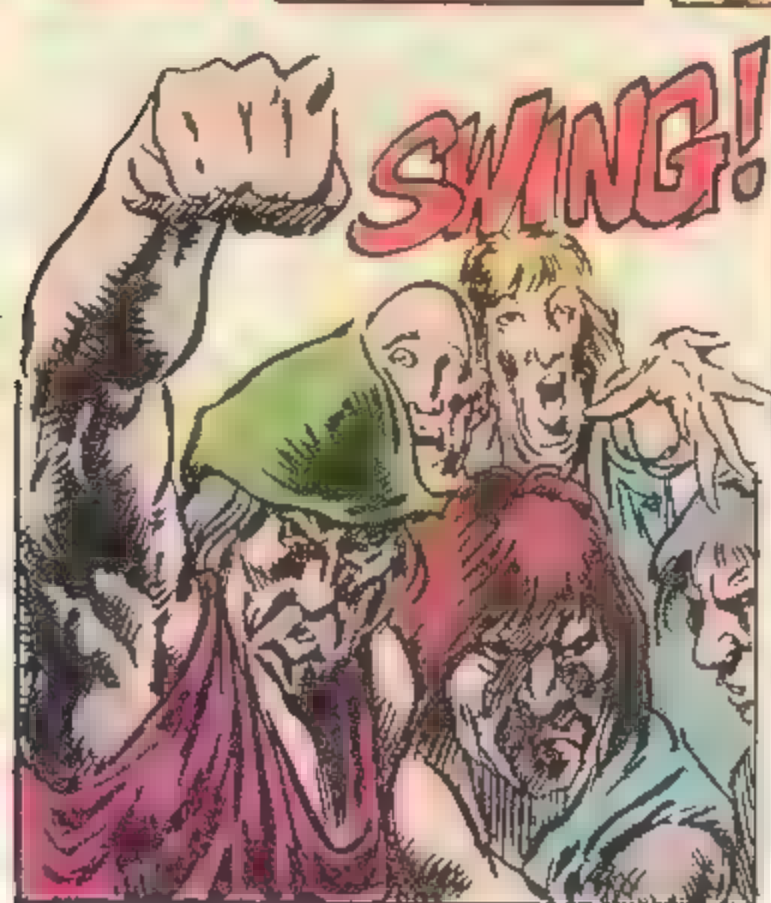
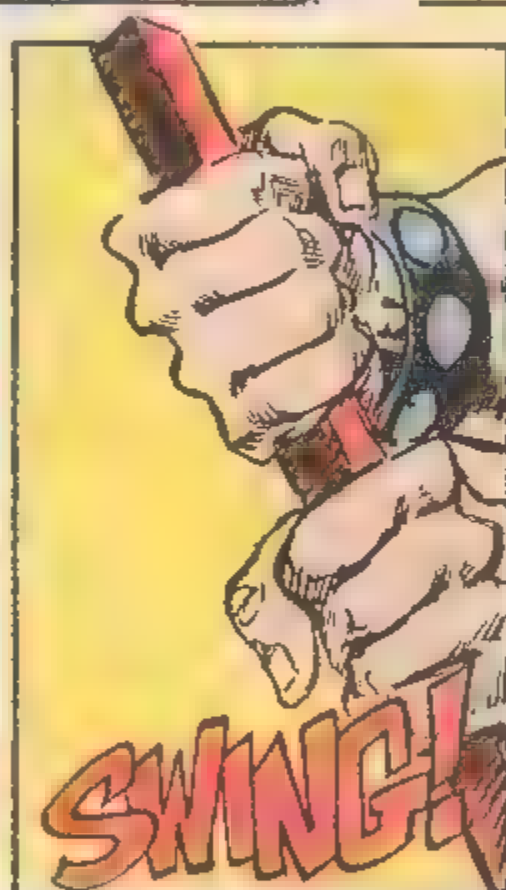
MURDERER!

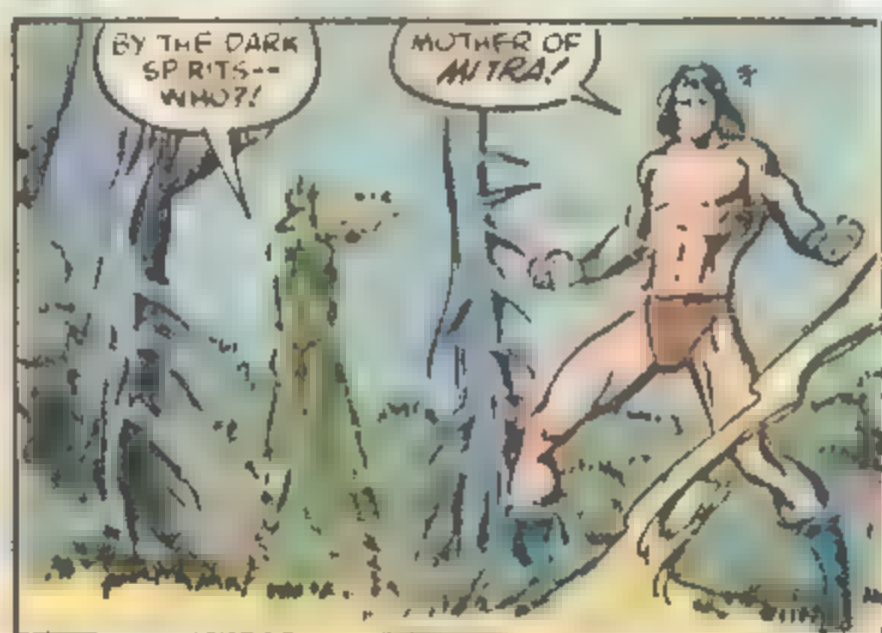
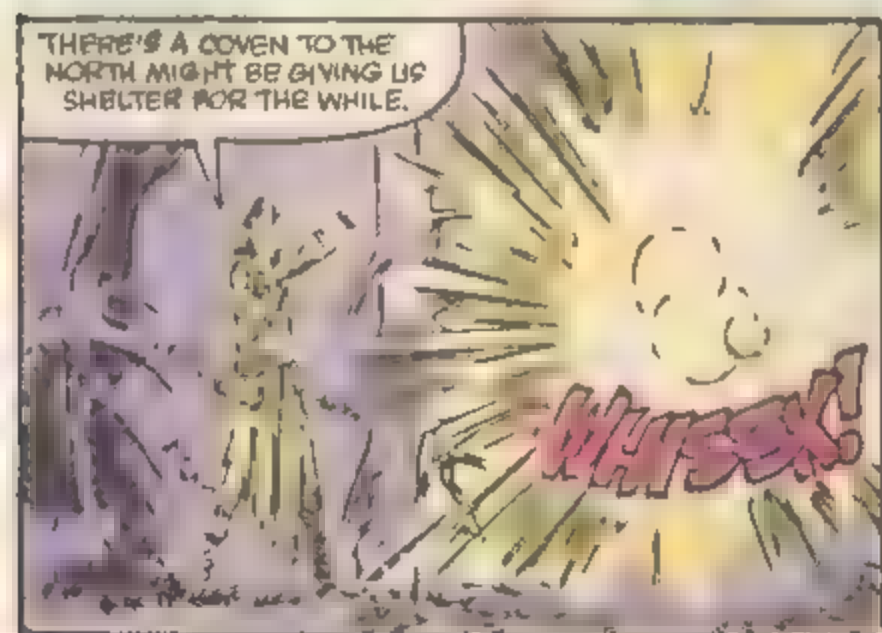
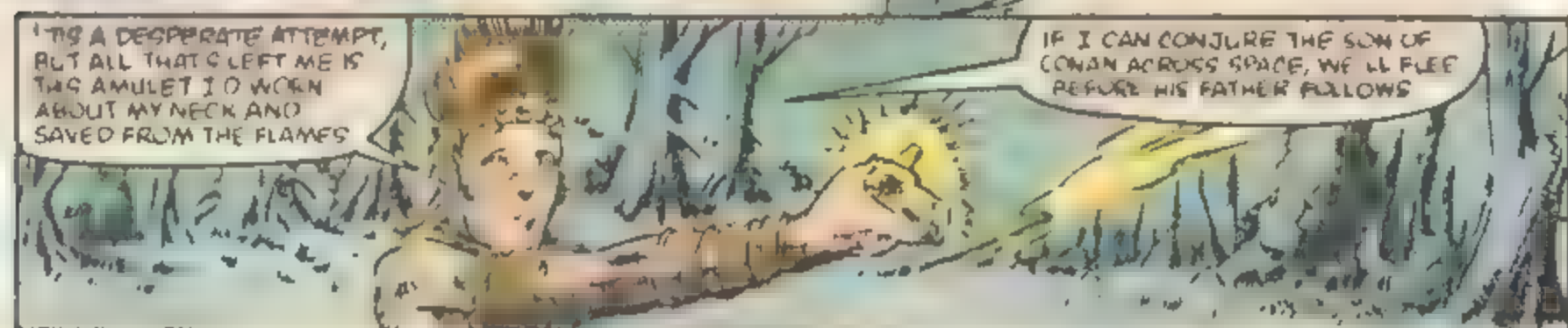
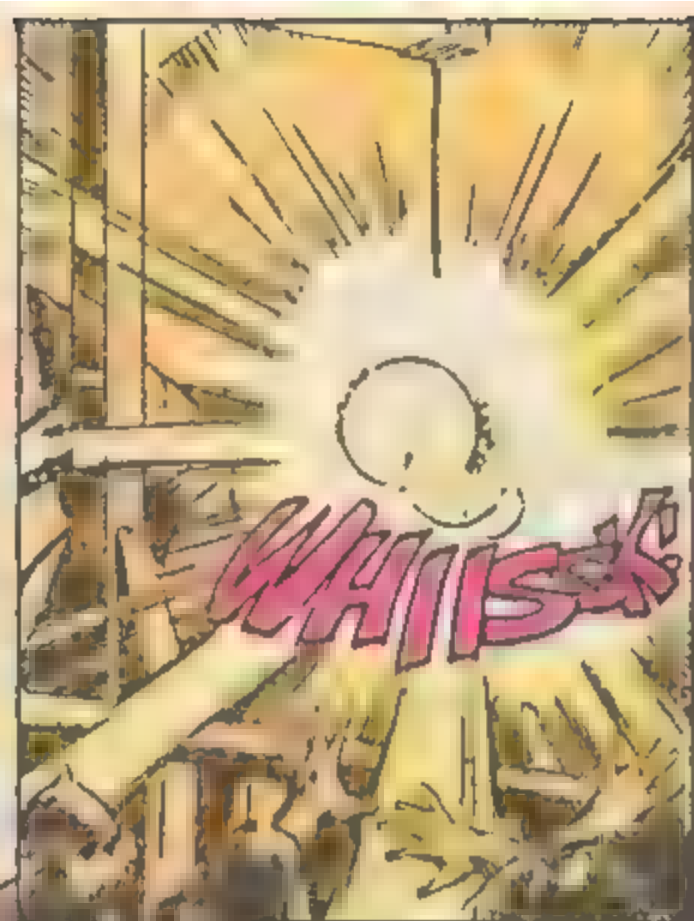


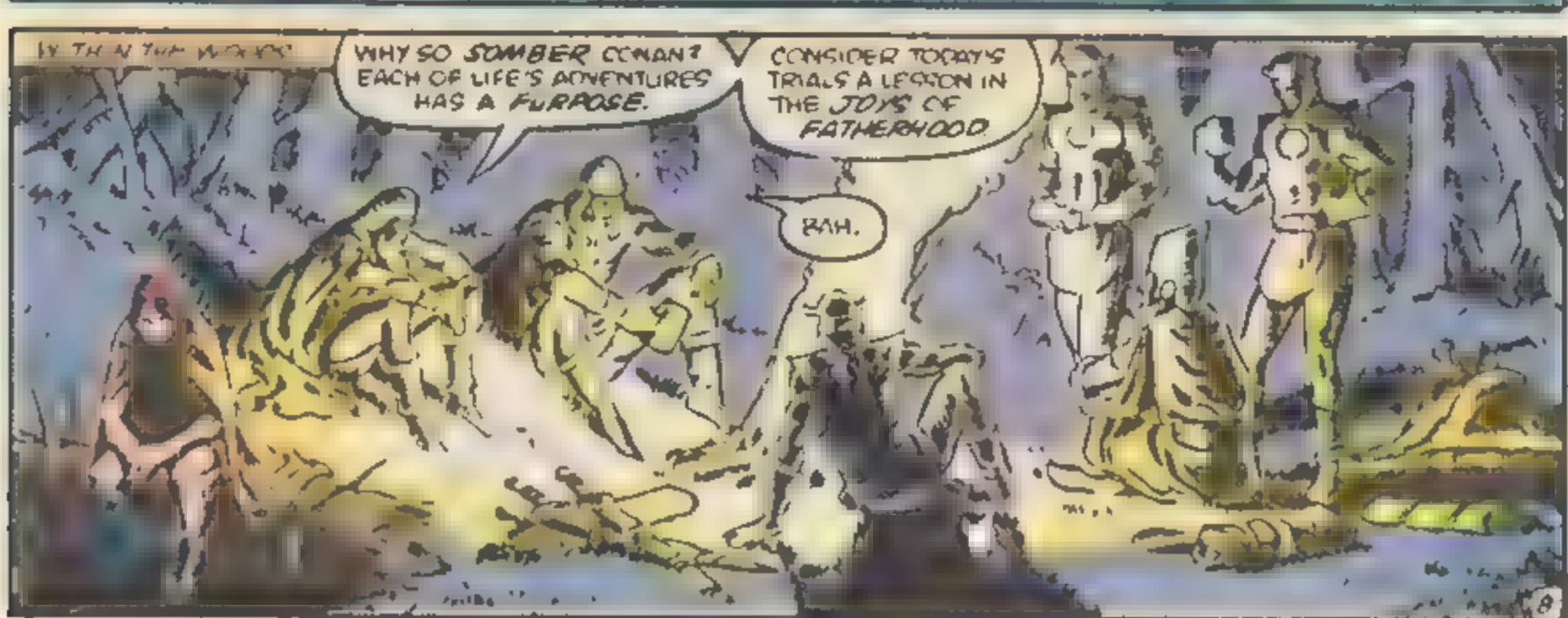
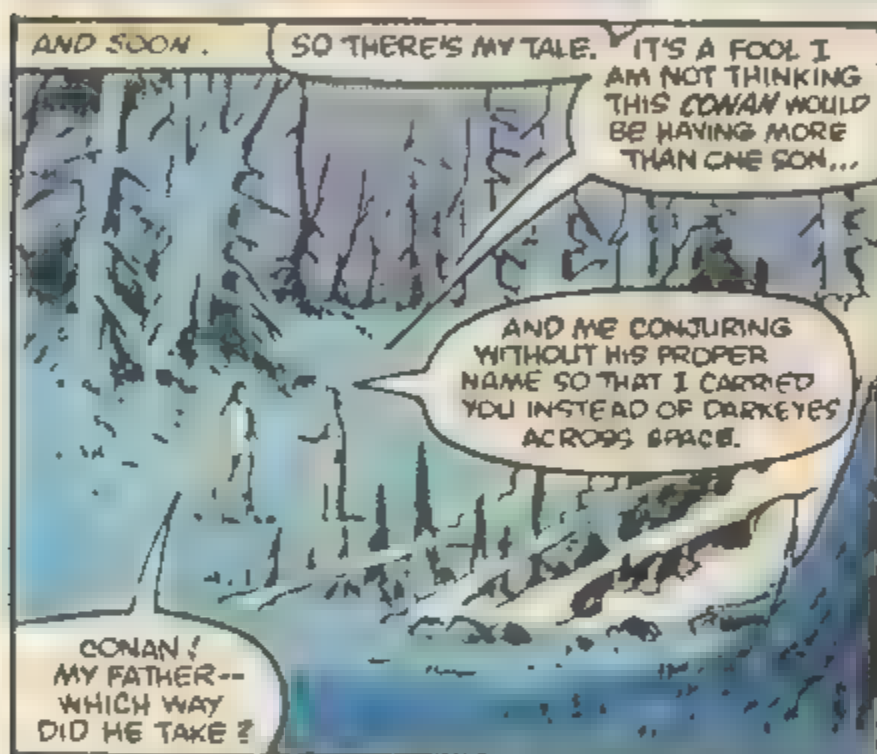
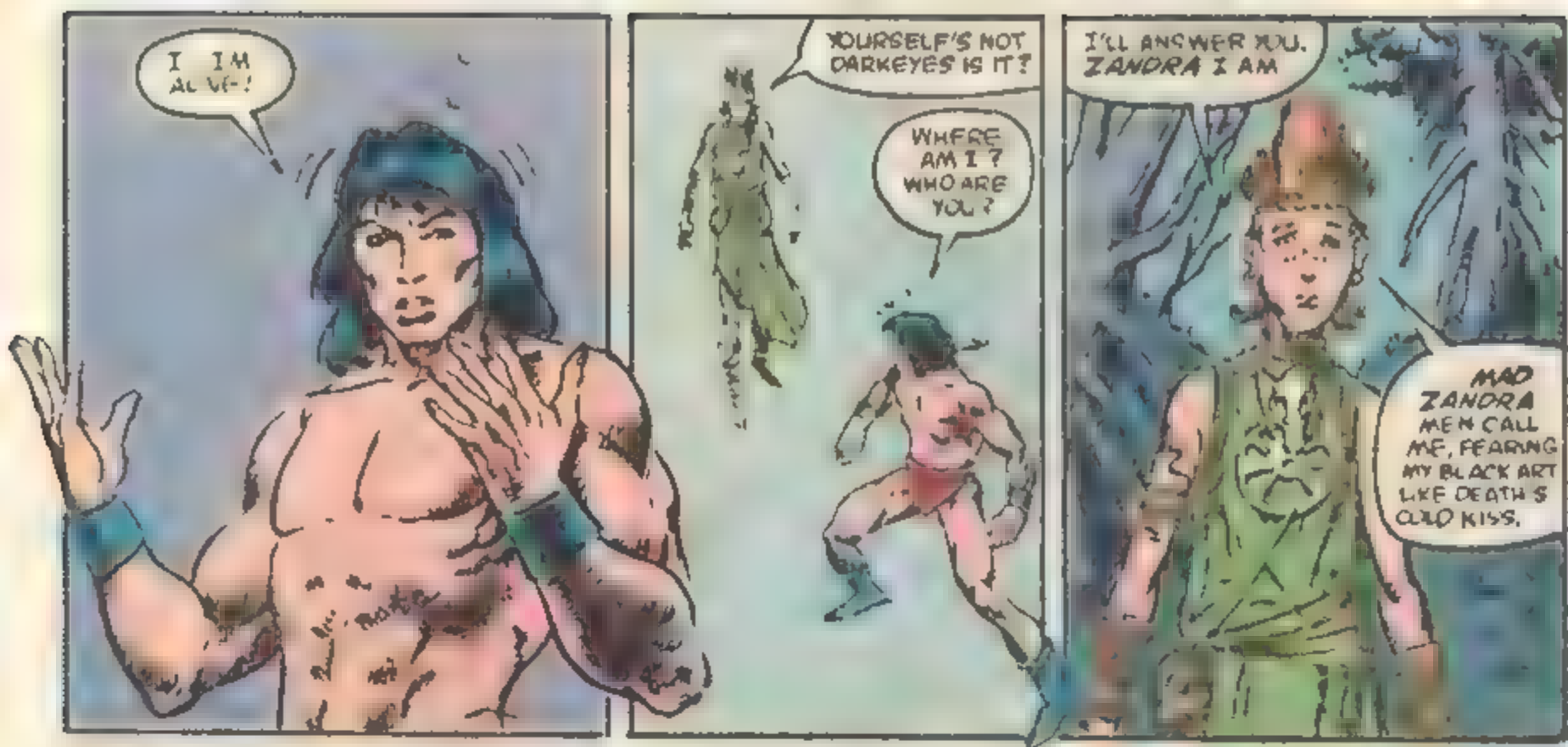














MY LEG ACHES, SIRE. I WOULD WALK TO EASE THE PAIN.

WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

DEXITHEUS WAS CHARMED ME AGAINST EVIL, FATHER. I WILL BE SAFE.



SHALL I SEND ONE OF THE DRAGONS TO FETCH TAURUS, MY LORD?

THE BOY IS NOT TO BE TOUCHED BY CROW'S FRIENDS CAPTAIN.

THERE ARE YET A FEW THINGS THE LORDING IN MANAGE TO DO HIMSELF



LET ME

STAY YOUR BLACK DRAGONS, TARGUIN! IN THAT DAY I CANNOT GET TEST MYSELF AGAINST AND HERE'S THE Y WANT EEL LE MUCH USE ANYWAY



BY GET I HAD MY CUNNED FATHER N T REND ME I D BE A MALE T I C N T N W TH THE LAKET FURLEN

...INSTEAD OF A HOBBLING CRIPPLE, MISSHAPEN AND FEARFUL TO LOOK ON.



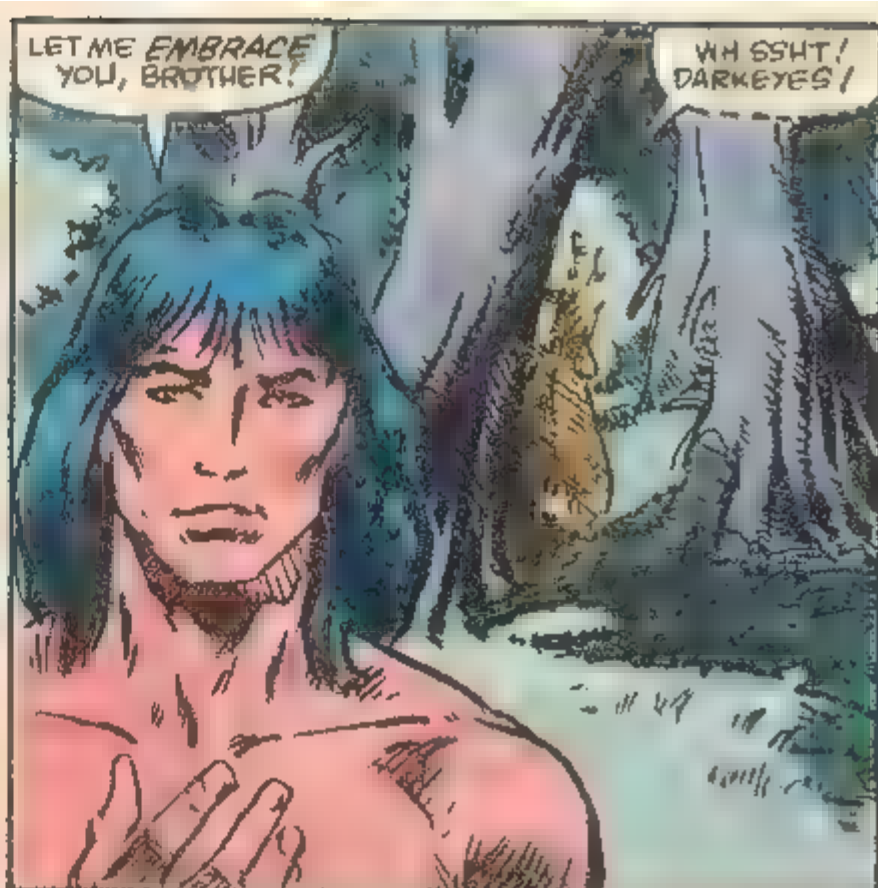
TAURUS! IN THAT YOU



GHAAA...!
A SPIRIT!
MY DEAD
BROTHER'S
GHOST!

NO, TAURUS, IT'S REALLY ME!
CONN, YOUR BROTHER...
BROUGHT HOME BY THE
WITCH ZANDRA'S MAGIC!

BY THE SAINTS BUT
YOU'RE A RIGHT FOR
WEARY EYES!



LET ME *EMBRACE*
YOU, BROTHER!

WH SSHT!
DARKEYES!



MAD
ZANDRA!



WHAT
HAVE YOU
DONE,
WITCH?!

I ASKED ONLY FOR THE
SON OF CONAN.

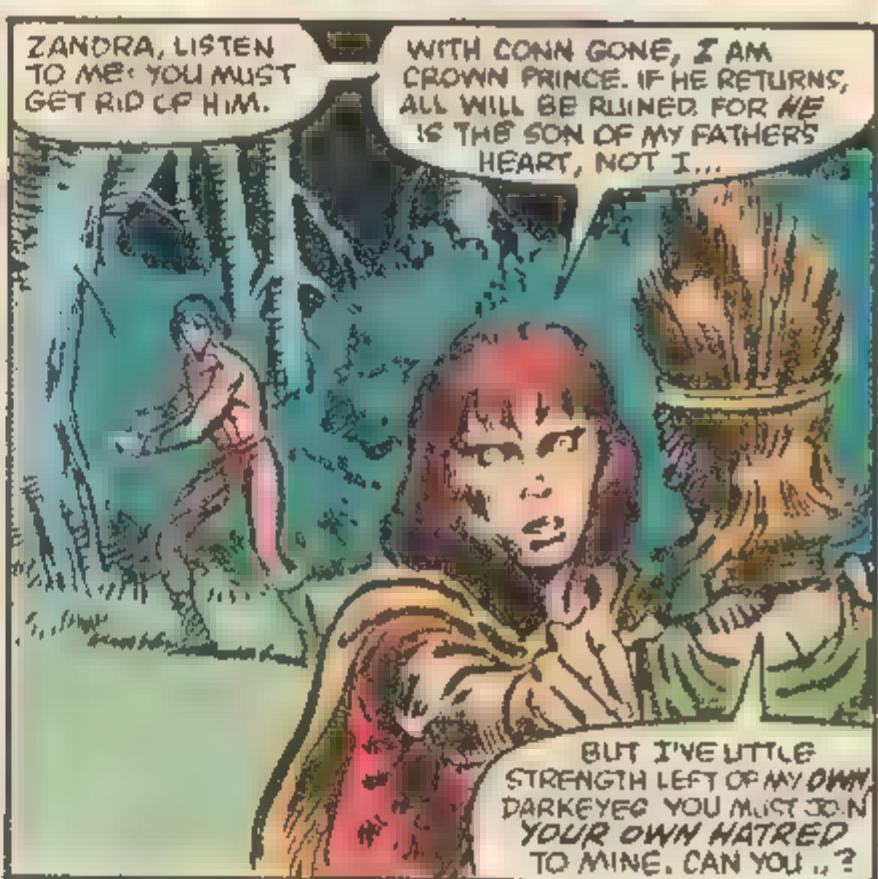


WHO KNEW THAT
DARKEYES' CWIN BROTHER
WOULD I RECEIVE.



TAURUS!

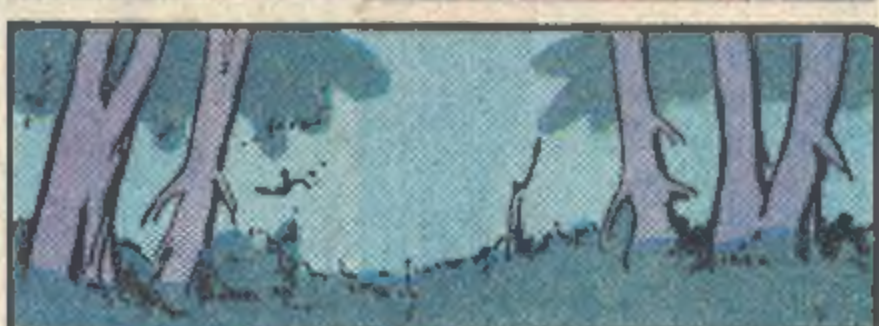
THERE'S
FATHER'S
VOICE!



ZANDRA, LISTEN
TO ME: YOU MUST
GET RID OF HIM.

WITH CONN GONE, I AM
CROWN PRINCE. IF HE RETURNS,
ALL WILL BE RUINED FOR *HE*
IS THE SON OF MY FATHER'S
HEART, NOT I...

BUT I'VE LITTLE
STRENGTH LEFT OF MY OWN.
DARKEYES YOU MUST JOIN
YOUR OWN HATRED
TO MINE. CAN YOU...?



CROM, NO! MY BRAIN
YET REELS WITH GHOSTS
AND PHANTOMS!

THE LAD'S STONE DEAD,
AND NOT ALL THE WORLD'S
WISHING WILL MAKE IT
OTHERWISE.

YOU... UH...
CALLED
SIRE?

CROM CURSE
YOU FOR A
BLACKHEARTED
FOOL!

YOU'LL NOT LEAVE MY
SIGHT AGAIN 'TIL YOU'RE
CONFINED WITHIN YOUR
CASTLE CHAMBER.

I'LL WAIT FOR
YOURSELF,
DARKEYES.

FATHER!

...DON'T
LEAVE
ME...

...AGAIN...

TO BE CONTINUED!

KING CONAN

NO EDITORIAL

That's right. There will be no witty, informative, incredibly well-written editorial this time out. I've been pre-empted by Dave Simons, and Michael Wm. Kaluta, who have both put down their brushes and pencils and taken a turn at the typewriter. Since this issue of **CONAN THE KING** is already somewhat bizarre, I thought I'd go all the way. Look around for a pair of little yellow boxes just like this one for a pair of behind-the-scenes notes on how a new Marvel character is created. As for my witty, informative editorial ... there's always next ish.

Jim Owsley

see what part Conan plays in the organization of the Black Dragons. Does he merely select the proper leaders for it or does he get involved in the training, etc.? Conan would certainly lead by example, but I think he might at least occasionally get down to the nitty-gritty with the Dragons.

The back-up Conn feature is a good use of this mag's extra length (though I wouldn't want to see the complete disappearance of the book-length tale) in that it focuses on a character unique to this mag. I was intrigued to see Conn, the "perfect" son, ignore a remembered piece of advice from his father.

T.M. Maple
Weston, Ontario

Conan will be recruiting new Black Dragons in **CONAN THE KING** #26, T.M. You'll be able to see just what it takes to be a Dragon.

Long Live The King?

CONAN THE KING has become so addictive lately that I climb the walls for two months waiting for the next issue! The story right now is so intriguing: a thought-dead prince, a sick Conan, a sinister plot, and a kingdom in chaos! These events are turning into such a story that I give it my highest recommendations.

That is not my only reason for writing, however. This reason concerns **CONAN II, SON OF THE BARBARIAN KING**. I find it excellent that Conn is penniless and alone, learning to survive as Conan did before him. Having always felt that the son of Conan was too soft, I revel in Conn's

training as a true son of Cimmeria. Please continue to have the last few pages in each issue dedicated to the prince. He needs to learn. And when (if?) Conn returns to Conan's side consider a Black Dragons feature. I thoroughly enjoyed issue #22's story of them.

Adam Gerle
Edmonton, Alberta

Seems we have quite a few fans up in Canada! Thanks for the raves, Adam. As for a **BLACK DRAGONS** series in the pages of **CONAN THE KING**... who knows what the future will bring? In fact, the more we mention it, the more likely it seems. In fact, the number twenty-eight seems to come to mind...

Dear Jim,

It's about time! It's about time Taurus and Radegund showed up in the magazine. Where have they been all these years ... hiding?! And Taurus' hair ... it's colored (Mitra forbid!) purple?! Crom's fiends! Is he a Hyborian punk rocker?

CONAN THE KING is an excellent magazine. I hope you try and keep that high standard. Start with Taurus' hair.

Brian Engler
Depew, N.Y.

Dear Marvel Comics,

I've been buying your **CONAN THE KING** lately. My only complaint is the way Michael Wm. Kaluta draws Conan (see issue #21). He gives him a cute page boy haircut and a cute nose instead of the broken, hawked nose Buscema gives him. Please talk to Michael about this (if it's not too presumptuous).

Steve Swanston
Santa Rosa, CA



PIERCING, TATOOING, AND SCARIFICATION

Dexitheus (or "Dexy" as I like to call him) was never shown in any other Conan comic. He was, I think, mentioned in *Treasure of Tranicos*, so to that extent he was created by "Two-Gun Bob" Howard. However, there was never even a description of what Dexy might look like. So when he had to appear in this issue of **CONAN THE KING**, I simply made him up!

Dexy is older than anybody else in the book, and a bit tired. He still tries to look sharp, though, and carefully maintains his forked beard. His robes are the clerical uniform of a High Priest of Mitra. As for Dexy's hat, it's the miter any High Priest of Mitra would wear (ask one, if you don't believe me). I borrowed the design from ancient Egyptian sources. Don't ask me why he has those "chicklets" on it. You can make up your own reason and send it in if you like.

You might note that Dexy wears shoes, not boots. He's not really fit for slogging around the woods as he did this ish, but would be far better off shuffling around the temple.

Why, you may ask, does Dexy have all those earrings and a nose ring? Well, I have one earring myself, and I did want Dexy to appear to be somewhat exotic, so I gave him all the extra jewelry. Besides, people throughout history have altered their own bodies by piercing, tatooing, and scarification for religious reasons as well as for fun and profit.

Happy trails,
Dave Simons

Michael Wm. Kaluta

NEXT ISSUE: Conan, Trocero, and the Black Dragons escort Radegund to meet her fiancée, Baron Maloric's eldest son. But waiting in the shadows . . . a ruthless band of assassins! All this . . . and Prospero running the castle, too! See you in sixty.

Ivan Mumm
Berkeley, CA

Rice Mactio
Spartanburg, S.C.

After eight years of collecting Marvels, I can't tell you how exciting it is to actually see my own name in one of your publications.

Joe Chiappetta
Broadview, IL

Edward Bersay
Murfreesboro, TN

Robert Bulzacchelli
Scarsdale, N.Y.